

YOUNG KLONDIKE

STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

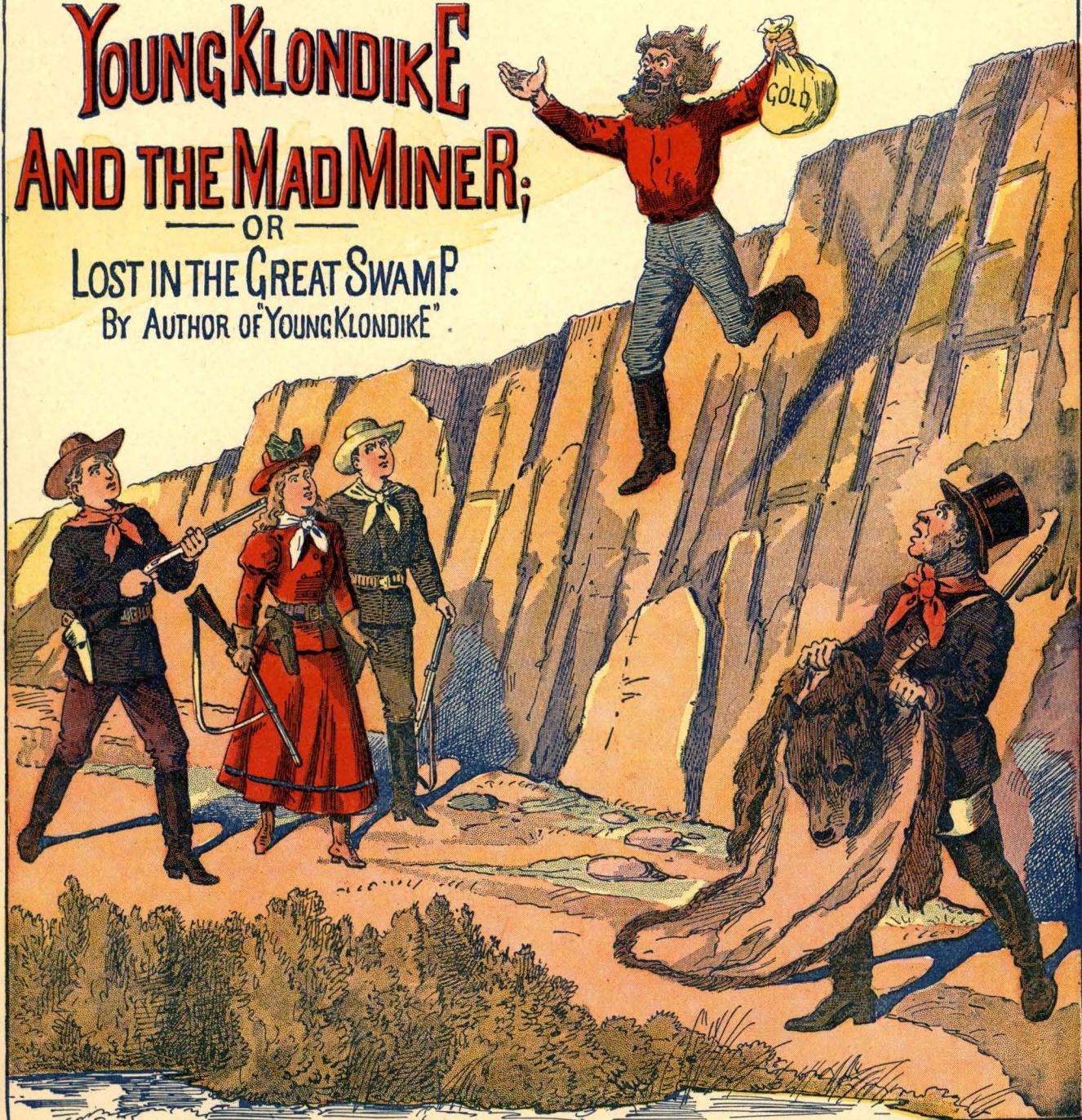
No. 26.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 15, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG KLONDIKE AND THE MAD MINER; OR LOST IN THE GREAT SWAMP.

By AUTHOR OF "YOUNG KLONDIKE".



"Look out for him, boys! He's mad!" yelled the Unknown. He had no more than spoken when the wild looking man, who had shed the bearskin, leaped off the rock. "It's gold! Gold!" he shouted, waving the bag.

YOUNG KLONDIKE.

♦ Stories of a Gold Seeker. ♦

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Young Klondike and the Mad Miner;

— OR —

LOST IN THE GREAT SWAMP.

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CHAPTER I.

ACROSS THE BARMAN FIELDS.

FORTY MILE CREEK, that well known name which we so often see mentioned in connection with the Klondike, is applied not only to a creek, but to a town.

This is, or should be, sufficiently well known to need no mention, but for those who have not studied the geography of the gold regions, we will state that the town of Forty Mile, as it is always shortened up, lies on the banks of the Yukon, somewhat lower down than Dawson City, and is the center of considerable activity of its own.

Back of Forty Mile the country is, perhaps, less known than that which lies in the neighborhood of Dawson. There are mountains here upon whose summits the snow hardly ever melts, and there are also great stretches of tundra, the Alaskan swamp, where the moss, also called tundra, often grows higher than a man's head.

One afternoon in the fall, just as the fearful winter of the Klondike was closing in, a party of four pedestrians were toiling up a mountain trail toward the Acatchut Pass, one of the most noted danger spots in all the Klondike country, although it has been very little talked about as yet.

Beyond this pass lies the Barman Fields, and it was there our party was bound.

The famous Young Klondike was in the lead—Ned Golden was his proper name—and his friend and partner, Dick Luckey, walked beside him.

The Unknown, that odd little detective, who follows Young Klondike in all his wanderings, came behind in company with Miss Edith Welton, a young lady from San Francisco, whose life Ned Golden had saved on his first journey up from Seattle, Miss Edith having

been a passenger on a wrecked steamer from which Ned bravely rescued her.

These four constituted the noted firm of Golden & Luckey, whose fame extended all over the Klondike country.

Golden & Luckey's signature was good for millions, and yet only a short time ago Ned and Dick were simply poor clerks in New York City.

As for the Unknown he was a mere adventurer, of course, and a very mysterious one at that, but just who he was or where he properly belonged no one knew. As for Ned and Dick they did not even know his name, as for some strange reason he always refused to tell it.

The Unknown claimed to be a detective and probably was. He claimed also to be in search of some mysterious criminal whom he called "his man," although who this man was or what crime he had committed, even Young Klondike could not have told.

But enough of these introductions. Our friends are toiling up the pass and the sun is descending. Their immediate destination is a certain hut called Jake's Relay House, which stands at the edge of the Barman Fields. It is quite essential to reach it before sundown, for there are many ins and outs to the Acatchut Pass, and to get lost here means certain death.

"What do you think about it, Ned?" asked Dick; "are we on the right road or the wrong one? This is getting to be a pretty serious matter. It will be a bad job if we are caught here in the dark."

"Well, I'm not worrying, Dick," replied Ned. "I don't see any use in doing that."

"No, nor I either, but at the same time it is going to be dark in a few moments and I am anxious on Edith's account."

"Hello, there! Who's worrying about me?" called Edith from behind. "That's not allowed, you know. I take pot luck with the rest."

"Three cheers for the Red, White and Blue!" cried the Unknown, suddenly pulling off the battered plug hat which he always persisted in wearing winter and summer, tossing it up in the air and catching it on his head as it came down again. "We can't get left! No, we can't! I see the Relay House now!"

"What's struck you, Zed?" demanded Edith. "I see nothing at all."

Now Zed was the short for Zedekiah, which last the detective claimed was his Christian name.

As it was the only name he would own to the boys often used it when addressing him, but when they spoke of him they invariably did so as the Unknown.

"What's struck me, Edith?" cried the detective. "Why, I've been struck by a flag, the Stars and Stripes, Old Glory, or any other old thing you have a mind to call it, and if we keep on as we are going, we shall be at the Relay House inside of twenty minutes. Ye gods and little fishes! I shall be glad when we get there. All I hope is that we may find the dogs."

"They'll be there all right," said Ned. "Pierre is to be trusted. He agreed to have eight dogs and a good sled to meet us and he will not fail; but where's your flag? I see nothing at all and I've been looking every way I could think of, too."

"Every way but the right one," laughed the detective. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've been watching you! Look up there!"

The Unknown pointed almost directly overhead, and there, sure enough, soaring from the top of the ledges on the left was Old Glory, a most welcome sight for our weary travelers.

The pass wound around between the ledges, and soon they saw a small log hut ahead of them with the flag waving from the peak of the roof.

"The Relay House!" cried Dick.

"At last we spot it!" echoed the Unknown. "I began to think that Jake's was only a myth and that we were to go on climbing up among the clouds forever. Now for the Barman Fields! I'm prepared to find them balmy and to see the green grass growing all around."

"Which is what you won't," laughed Ned. "Any-one who expects to see anything but snow on the Barman Fields at this time of the year, or any other, is going to get most beautifully left."

Now, what Young Klondike said was true enough, in part.

The Barman Fields were anything but grassy.

The name was applied to a long stretch of land which, being away up here in the mountains, is covered with snow about ten months in the year. A little more and it would be a glacier; but it was not that. Young Klondike misstated when he said that there was always snow on the Barman Fields. There was enough here now, however, and as the boys looked ahead they could see the long level stretch extending in between the cliffs as far as the eye could reach,

one continuous white surface, and yet there had been no snow on the lower levels of Alaska as yet.

Beyond the Barman Fields lay the "old Russian diggings," as they are termed, where gold was mined in the early days, but between was the Great Swamp, a twenty mile stretch of tundra land, overgrown with that wonderful moss, and interspersed with sluggish water courses called slews.

Young Klondike's way lay first across the Barman Fields, and then across the Great Swamp, for our friends were bound for the old Russian diggings.

Young Klondike had long desired to investigate them, and he was now determined to do it before winter set in.

"Push on, push on!" cried Ned. "We are almost there! A few more bold strokes and we shall be at Jake's Relay House, where we are to meet Pierre, the guide. It will be all plain sailing after that."

Ned had scarcely spoken, when a man came out of the hut and stood looking down the pass in the light of the setting sun.

"Jake!" cried the Unknown. "The sun is in his eyes and he don't see us."

"Give him the call, Zed! Give him the call!" exclaimed Dick.

Now, the Unknown had a voice like a fog horn, and when he bellowed: "Jake, Jake!" the man must have been deaf, indeed, not to hear him.

And the cry was heard. Immediately the man by the log hut pulled off his hat and began waving it. Then he ran into the hut and came out with another man, and both hurried down the pass to meet Young Klondike and his friends.

"It's Pierre and Jake!" cried Ned. "We are all right now."

And so they were for the time being, for a warm fire and a good supper lay ahead of them.

Jake was a queer old fellow who kept this log hut as a sort of tavern for the accommodation of miners and prospectors traveling to and from the old Russian diggings, by the way of the Barman Fields.

In the winter his Relay House was a perfect god-send and had saved the lives of many.

Never before had Young Klondike visited it, but he had often heard of the place, and when in anticipation of this journey he arranged to have Pierre, the guide, meet them there with the dog sled, he knew that his interests would be well looked out for by Jake, and yet the proprietor of the Relay House charged nothing for his accommodation.

If a traveler had money and chose to make Jake a present, well and good. If he had not he was welcome to whatever there was going, just the same, and a right royal welcome Young Klondike's party received now.

There was a big log fire roaring up the chimney in the open fireplace, a long table stood ready set, and there was an appetizing odor of roasting bear meat proceeding from the little lean-to kitchen behind the hut.

When supper was served it proved to be all that

one could wish for; Jake was an indefatigable hunter and a splendid cook.

"When do you start, Mr. Golden?" asked Jake, after he had served the party all around.

"Well, that depends upon Pierre," replied Ned. "We are pretty well tired out. I suppose you could accommodate us for the night if we decide to stay?"

"Certainly I can," replied Jake. "There is plenty of room in the Relay House, such as it is. There's the loft for the lady and bunks here by the fire with plenty of blankets and bearskins, but I should not postpone my start until morning if I were you."

"Hello! Why not?" asked Ned. "What do you know?"

"He's afraid of a snowstorm," said Pierre, the guide, "and upon my word it does look very much that way."

"It's coming sure," said Jake, "and if you will take my advice, gentlemen, you want to get off the Barman Fields before it comes. Down in the Great Swamp it will probably be rain and that will rather help you on your way than otherwise, but to be caught in a snowstorm on the fields or here in the Relay House might delay you for a week, or even worse if you should be unfortunate enough to lose your way."

"Then you think, Mr. Jake, that we ought to go ahead to-night?" asked Edith.

"I do, most decidedly," replied the old man.

"Jake and me have been talking it over, boss," said Pierre, "and we think you ought to push on if you can; if we have any kind of luck by half past four we ought to be at the end of Barman Fields. There we would be safe, for once down the mountain, we need hardly expect snow, and I reckon we can all of us stand a rain storm if worse comes to worse."

"That's settled, then," said Ned. "Whatever you say goes, Pierre. How are the dogs?"

"In good condition. As fine a lot as I ever drove."

"I can vouch for that," said Edith. "I went out and had a look at them while you were loading our packs on to the sled. They are splendid fellows, and ought to carry us over the Barman Fields in great shape."

"Dick—Zed—what do you say?" Ned asked.

"Shall we go?"

"Decidedly," replied the detective.

"By all means," added Dick.

"Then we will start at once; the sooner the better. Pierre, harness up, Dick will help you. Jake, here's something for our supper."

"No, boss, no! I don't take pay," said Jake.

"It's not pay. I know your ways, old man. This house is a great convenience and must be supported. Here, this is not for you, but for the benefit of travelers who may come after us and cannot pay. Keep the Relay House up, and you will always prosper."

Thus saying Young Klondike placed five twenty-dollar gold pieces in old Jake's unwilling hand, and in spite of his protest forced him to accept it.

In a few moments the sled was ready and Edith tucked away under the warm bearskins.

Ned, Dick and the Unknown placed themselves as best they could, and away they went flying across the Barman Fields.

It was time they started if they expected to avoid the coming storm.

The night was starless; dense gray clouds were scudding across the sky.

A strong wind, damp and chilly blew down upon them from the northeast.

"It is going to be a terrible night," groaned the detective. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I feel it in my bones."

Were the bones of the Unknown good prophets or were they liable to make mistakes like the men who run our weather bureau?

The next chapter will tell about that, for just as Jake predicted the storm came, and it caught Young Klondike's party as they went flying across that desolate mountain table known as the Barman Fields.

CHAPTER II.

DOWN THE DEVIL'S SLIDE.

"PIERRE, this is a bad business."

"Bad enough, boss, but still the dogs are well used to all sorts of weather, and remember, it is not so easy to get lost on the Barman Fields. We can't go more than a mile right or left without striking the cliffs, and then all we have to do is to follow on to the end of the valley where we go down on to the tundra."

"True," replied Ned. "That makes it safer in theory, but if we get mixed up what is to hinder us from going round and round in a circle; you know that is the great danger in a storm like this."

"To the winds with danger!" cried the Unknown. "We are going along all right, and it's not a blizzard yet, by any means."

"Whatever we throw out is likely to go to the winds to-night," said Edith. "Did you ever see it blow harder than it does?"

"Why, certainly, I have," replied the detective. "When I was chasing my man in Russia in '73 I saw the wind blow so that it stripped the clothes right off a boy, and left him nothing but a paper collar."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Ned. "That's one of your fish stories."

"Fish! Right you are! I was fishing at the time in the Volga, and just as the gust came I had a big carp on the hook. It blew the carp right out of the water and up into a tree, and I had a deuce of a job getting him down again, for he flopped about so that he wound the line around a branch and I spoiled a new pair of unmentionables shinning up the tree after him—that's a fact; you can believe it or not, just as you please."

"I have just that same implicit faith in it that I

have in all the rest of your yarns," laughed Ned, "but speaking of blizzards, if this isn't one it is next door to it. It's blowing harder than ever and I'm not at all sure that we are not already lost."

Pierre made no reply to this. In fact he had been looking out anxiously for some moments, trying in vain to penetrate the mass of whirling flakes and locate the cliffs on their right, toward which he had been directing the dogs for some moments now.

But this it seemed impossible to do. The cliffs should have been there, but they were not.

As the moments passed the fury of the storm increased.

Soon a regular blizzard was upon them—one of the kind we read about, but so seldom see.

If the wind had blown hard before, its force was doubled now. The snow whirled about them in the most blinding fashion.

In a few moments more Young Klondike realized that the worst had happened.

They were lost in the blizzard, and the chance of finding their way until the storm ceased looked pretty slim.

"Pierre, what's to be done?" he asked, after a little. "Where are those cliffs?"

"I'm sure I don't know, boss," replied the guide, gloomily. "I've crossed the Barman Fields a good many times, but I never saw it as bad as this."

"We are going around in a circle. That's what!" cried the Unknown.

"I'm afraid we are."

"Then, by the Jumping Jeremiah, let's stop it! Let's take a tumble to ourselves and go straight ahead!"

"Easier said than done, gents. It seems to me that I am driving straight ahead as it is."

"Give the dogs their head. Let them lead the way."

"That's a good idea," said Edith. "I'm sure they'll know which way to take us."

"Something must be done," said Pierre. "I own up, gentlemen, I'm stumped."

"And the danger?" asked Young Klondike, as calmly as if there had been none at all.

"Is great. We may have run between the cliffs through Big Buck canyon. We should be pretty near there now."

"Allowing that's so, what then?"

Pierre shuddered. "Then we come to the Devil's Slide," he said. "That's where the rocks slope suddenly down onto the Great Swamp, a distance of some two thousand feet."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, there's a coast for you!" cried the Unknown; "a two thousand foot run! Phew! Why, tobogganing in Montreal wouldn't be in it! How long is this canyon, brother? How soon may we expect to begin coasting if we are in it now?"

"Why, the canyon is perhaps a quarter of a mile in length," replied Pierre, "but don't suggest it, boss. We can hardly be in the canyon now or we should see

the rocks, I'm sure, although I must confess it is some forty feet wide, and one might run a long time without seeing the cliffs in a storm like this."

Now it would have been quite as well if the guide had mentioned this danger sooner.

Then Young Klondike could have been on the lookout for it, but as it was the news of its existence had no more than come to him before the danger spot was close at hand.

"Rocks on the right!" shouted the Unknown suddenly.

"Merciful Heavens! It's the Devil's Slide! We are right upon it!" yelled Pierre, and he dropped the reins and sprang off the sled without losing a second.

It was impossible for Young Klondike's party to imitate his example. They were so wound up in the bearskins that they could not move.

The frowning cliffs made themselves more apparent through the gloom. Young Klondike tried to seize the reins, but they were trailing on the snow.

"Keep your seats!" he cried. "It is the only thing that will save us!" and whipping out his knife he cut the traces.

Not an instant too soon.

A second later and the sled passed directly over three of the dogs, slow to get out of its path, and went whirling down the side of the mountain.

They were on the Devil's Slide. Down two thousand feet they must go and nothing could stop them.

But the snow? Would it hold all the way?

If so there was some chance for them, but if it should suddenly give out and the sled was to continue its journey down over the ragged rocks of the slide there was but little hope.

"Brace up, friends!" cried Young Klondike. "Dick, you hold on to Edith! We are going to make this run all right, and you'll see!"

Was it so?

The speed attained by the sled was frightful, and it seemed to be increasing.

Down they flew, faster, faster, always gaining.

The snow beating in their faces now grew soft and wet.

Rain was ahead of them; there could be no doubt of it.

Young Klondike realized his danger, but he could not speak.

It was the same with the others. They were breathless, even the Unknown was silent now as they flew on. Down! Down! Down!

"It's coming," thought Young Klondike, for now it was rain and not snow which began beating in their faces.

And the sled was still descending with lightning speed.

Down! Down! Down! Down the Devil's Slide, perhaps to death.

CHAPTER III.

WHO IS THIS MAN?

No one could blame Young Klondike or any of his party for expecting death in that awful moment, for now the sled was bounding along over the bare rocks, and so dense was the gloom that they could not see a yard ahead of them.

But it was not to be. Death was not to come!

Just as Ned was giving up in despair, the sled bounded off the rocks, and with a drop of perhaps twenty feet ended its mad rush in the water, but better a cold bath in the rain than the awful fate which Young Klondike believed awaited them at the end of the Devil's Slide.

"Look to Edith, Dick!" shouted Ned. "I'll take care of the goods."

"I'm all right. Nobody need mind me!" cried Edith. "Zed has given me a helping hand."

It was always the same with the Unknown.

He was up and dressed, as the saying goes, upon all occasions, and he had seized Edith in his arms, and was swimming with her toward the bank before Young Klondike had time to speak.

It was so dark that they could not see each other. The blinding rain dashing in their faces added to the difficulty, but once assured of Edith's safety, Ned and Dick went bravely to work to get the sled out of the slew.

"Here! Give us a push, Dick!" shouted Ned, who had crawled out upon the bank and had hold of the front of the sled. "Up she goes! That's the talk. Once more! That's it! That's it! Confound the thing! It's as heavy as lead, but we are gaining. Try again! Now, then, both together and out she comes!"

With a mighty effort the sled was dragged and pushed up upon the bank just as Edith and the Unknown came hurrying up ready to lend a helping hand.

The danger was now over.

Drenched to the skin, the entire party now were to be sure, but then they had been that before and so they cared little for the additional wetting.

In fact, this sort of thing did not worry them a bit, for there was no sort of exposure or rough handling that Young Klondike and his friends were not used to.

They pulled the sled further up on the bank, and finding that the waterproof wrappings had protected all their goods perfectly, began to congratulate themselves upon their narrow escape.

"But where are we, anyhow?" cried the Unknown. "It's so blessed dark that I can't see anything."

"Too bad about poor Pierre," said Edith. "I'm afraid he will perish up there on the mountain."

And indeed the prospect was very bad for the guide, but as far as sending him any help was concerned, that was simply out of the question.

Left on the Barman Fields in the blizzard, he might as well have been in the moon.

As soon as the goods had been made secure Young Klondike began looking about to see what could be done next.

Of course it was very uncomfortable to think of staying there under the rocks in the rain, but on the other hand without Pierre to guide them, Young Klondike's party had not the faintest idea which way to go, so for a few moments they just stood there looking at each other, shivering with the chill of their wet garments and feeling about as uncomfortable as it was possible for human beings to be.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, this won't do!" exclaimed the Unknown, at last. "We shall all get pneumonia if we stay here. It reminds me of the time when I was lost in the great Dismal Swamp down in Virginia in the fall of 1842."

"Rats!" cried Dick. "How old were you in 1842?"

"Rubbish!" exclaimed Ned. "I don't believe you were ever lost in the Dismal Swamp."

"Now, come, it's hard to have one's word doubted in this fashion," said the detective. "I was going to say that after wandering about there for fourteen days and fifteen nights—no, I'm wrong, it was fifteen days and fourteen nights, but it don't matter—I saw a light ahead and went for it and—by the Jumping Jeremiah, I see a light ahead now!"

Now, all this talk on the part of the Unknown was just to give him time to look more intently at the light which he had discovered a few moments before and he wanted to locate it before he spoke.

"There you are, boys!" he cried. "It's a hut, and it stands right on the edge of the tundra, about three-quarters of a mile from here."

"There is a light there, sure enough," said Ned, looking in the direction which the Unknown pointed. "Strange I did not see it before, and I was looking that way, too."

"Nothing strange about it," replied the detective. "It's a mere spark, flashes up, and then goes down again. See, it's gone now."

"Right you are! I can't see it, now."

"No; nor I. It's a fire on a hearth, though."

"Hold on! How do you know that?" demanded Dick. "How do you know it's a hut at all?"

"Now, then! Now, then! Do you want me to give away the secrets of my profession? However, I'll do it for you. Follow the ground along with your eye, and you will see that the light is raised about four feet above it. There it comes again—now you can see."

"You're right about that," said Edith. "I do see."

"Very good. That tells me that the light is shining through a window. I know that it's a fire on the hearth from the way it goes up and down."

"Well, for Heaven's sake, if it's a fire in a hut let's go for it!" exclaimed Edith. "Why do we stay talking here?"

"But our goods," said Dick. "Are we to leave them behind us?"

"We must," said Ned. "We all need dry clothes and shelter. The goods must take their chances, but I don't believe anything will happen to them. Come along!"

They all started toward the hut, for such it proved to be.

It stood right under the rocks facing the tundra, a two-story affair, built of logs in a very substantial fashion. The light flashing behind the window suggested a cozy fireside, which was most welcome to our travelers, drenched as they were and shivering with cold.

Ned pushed on in advance, and seeing that the door stood partly open, stepped in without knocking.

Instantly his companions heard him give a wild shout, and saw him make a rush into the hut.

"Hello! What's the matter now?" cried Dick, running forward.

Ned sprang out through the door before he could reach it. "Look, look!" he shouted, pointing up to the rocks behind the hut.

They already saw the strange figure. It was a man wrapped in a bearskin, with the head and claws exposed.

Apparently he had jumped out of the back window of the hut. Now he was scrambling up the rocks, shouting wildly.

His words were gibberish. What he said no one could make out.

In a moment he gained a rocky shelf about a hundred feet above them. Here he paused for an instant, shook his fist at Young Klondike's party, and running in among the broken ledges, disappeared.

"Good gracious!" cried Edith; "what sort of a thing is that?"

"A madman!" gasped Ned. "A madman as sure as fate!"

"Think so?" said Dick. "He acted as if he was afraid of us, and—"

"Why, he was in the act of committing suicide!" cried Ned. "He was just going to hang himself. By thunder, he would have done it in another moment if I hadn't come in as I did."

"Mad! Of course he's mad!" exclaimed the detective; "but what in thunder do we care as long as he's gone. Come on, children! We're going for the comforts of that fire. There's no one else there, I suppose, Ned?"

"No," said Ned; "there's no one else that I saw. I declare it has put me all in a tremble. I never was so startled in my life as when I came in there and saw that fellow hanging. Look! There's the rope! He had it around his neck, but just as soon as he saw me he threw it off and sprang out the window, which was wide open, as you see it now."

The rope was fastened to a big hook, which was screwed into a beam overhead.

One end was twisted into a noose, but just how the

man was going to manage to pull himself up clear of the floor the Unknown declared he could not see.

"Shut the door! Shut the door!" he cried, after they had talked the matter over a few moments. "We've got to make ourselves comfortable here, madman or no madman."

"That's the talk," said Ned, closing the door. "Pull down that window, Dick, I'll explore the loft. Edith must change her clothes at once."

And indeed they were all in need of a change of clothes with as little delay as possible, and with this idea in mind they had brought along their grips from the sled.

The loft was a roomy, comfortable place, and as Ned could not see a trace of anyone up there, Edith retired to it joining the boys later on.

Meanwhile Ned, Dick and the Unknown stripped by the fire and rubbing themselves down with dry towels and putting on dry underclothes and trousers, were soon in better shape.

Their coats and vests were hung before the open fire to dry, as were Edith's clothes when she threw them down from the loft.

"This is all right," said the detective. "As your madman don't seem to come back, Young Klondike, we may as well take possession here. Anything to eat in the cupboard? No, not a taste! Your madman must have been a starving madman if this is where he lives."

The Unknown was rummaging all around the room, but there were no provisions of any kind in the hut, although there were dishes and pots and pans and everything that a miner would need.

There were also mining tools and a bag containing about twenty ounces of gold dust.

This would seem to indicate that the madman had been trying his hand at gold digging.

But it was all guess work, for the night passed and the stranger did not return.

Edith was the only one who slept. She retired to the loft after awhile, but Young Klondike and the others sat around the fire until morning.

About six o'clock it stopped raining, and by seven the clouds had cleared away and the stars came out in all their glory, and what can be greater than the glory of the Alaskan night.

"No use waiting for daylight," said Young Klondike, throwing open the door and looking out of the hut. "We may as well go down and drag up the sled now. We want breakfast. As soon as it's daylight we'll start for the pass where we would have come down from the Barman Fields. We must go back and have a look for poor Pierre if he still lives, or for his body if he perished in the storm."

"That means another night in the hut," said the Unknown. "Well, if it must be it must, although I don't like the delay. Wonder what has become of our madman?"

It was easy enough to wonder, but the Unknown's curiosity was not to be gratified.

The sled was found undisturbed where they left it, and they drew it up to the hut.

A good fire was built on the hearth, and breakfast started. It was all ready by the time Edith came down.

As yet nothing had been seen of the stranger. Young Klondike and his friends were still asking themselves the question: "Who is this man?"

After the sun rose all started for the pass. It was a beautiful day and quite warm, considering the time of year.

The tundra spread out before them as far as the eye could reach. Great flocks of duck and blackbirds were to be seen passing over it here and there.

"Good shooting off there in the slews, Edith," remarked the detective, as they walked along.

"We'll try it later on," said Edith. "I shouldn't mind a little ducking if we only had a boat."

"Of course our boat is supposed to be waiting for us at the pass," said Ned. "Those were the orders. I sent a man to the old Russian camps two weeks ago with orders to have a good boat sent up for us and left there. I have no doubt it has been done."

"Then I tell you what," said the detective. "Let me go back up the mountain alone. I'll take good care of myself, and positively promise not to run any risk. While I'm gone you can go duck shooting, and try to get some idea of the big swamp, but for Heaven's sake don't get lost in it and expect me to find you. I don't want any such job as that."

Nobody made any objection to this plan.

The Unknown was always pleased to get off by himself and often when they were in camp for any length of time the detective would disappear and be gone for days together.

Sometimes he would give an account of himself upon his return, but oftener he would not. It was just according to how he happened to feel.

They now pushed on and after a walk of about two miles came to the pass.

There was no mistaking it. A narrow canyon here penetrated the mountain and they could see that it rose abruptly a little further on.

It was the famous pass to the Barman Fields beyond a doubt.

Higher up they could see snow in the pass. The top of the ridge was perfectly white.

All walked up the canyon for a short distance to get an idea of how it ran.

Before they had gone a dozen yards they came upon the boat.

It lay under an overhanging ledge and was a substantially built affair, flat-bottomed and well adopted to pushing about among the slews in the great swamp.

"Just the thing!" cried Ned, turning it over and having a look. "We can finish our journey all right in that. What shall we call it? I see it isn't named."

"Call it the Edith," suggested Dick.

"No, no!" said Edith. "We have a naphtha launch named for me, and I'm not going to have my name tacked on to this flat-bottomed tub."

"It shan't be named at all, then," declared Ned. "Come now, Zed, are you ready to go off up to the Barman Fields? Wish you didn't have to; but I suppose one of us ought to go."

The detective declared himself quite ready, and a few moments later he started up with his rifle and snowshoes.

They did not look for his return much before night, and it was arranged that he should come directly to the hut.

As soon as he was gone, Ned and Dick dragged the boat down to the slew and launched it.

"We'll bring it back full of ducks, and when we leave the hut we'll leave that poor fellow provisions enough for a week at least," Young Klondike declared, and he had no more than made the remark, than Dick spied the man away up on the mountain side.

There he stood on a projecting ledge, his bearskin flung over his shoulders.

He was gazing down at them attentively. Dick gave him the hail and he and Ned shouted themselves hoarse, but the man just stood there staring and never moved.

"Who can he be?" exclaimed Edith. "Certainly he is a most mysterious person."

It was the same old business. Again they found themselves asking each other the same question: "Who is that man?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE STRIKE ON THE EDGE OF THE GREAT SWAMP.

"THERE! He moves at last!"

"Look out! He's going to shoot!"

"Pshaw, Dick! His rifle wouldn't carry this far."

"Think not?"

"I'm sure of it. See, he puts it down again. He knows very well it won't. Now he's going away."

Here they were still watching the mysterious stranger, who now suddenly turned and went off out of sight among the rocks, waving his hand as he disappeared.

"Gone again!" exclaimed Ned. "Well, let him go. What can we do about it. Wonder if he'll steal our goods, though? That's a little more to the point."

But Young Klondike had thought of this before they left the hut, and had already decided to take his chances, so they all went off down the slew in the boat and spent three hours duck shooting.

The short day was well advanced when they re-

turned to the hut, pulling up to the front of the slope in their boat.

"Wonder if our things are all right?" exclaimed Dick. "Do you know it has been worrying me considerably."

"Get inside and see," replied Ned. "I'll make the boat fast here."

Edith followed Dick, and in a moment Ned heard her calling:

"He's been here!" she cried. "The madman has been here! He's left a letter for you, Ned, and, oh, you ought to see the way he has put the things."

Ned hurried back to the hut and found that everything they owned had been thoroughly overhauled.

Every box had been broken open, and their contents now lay scattered about the hut in the most fantastic fashion.

Out of the canned goods a pyramid had been built in the middle of the floor.

Out of Young Klondike's wet clothes—now dry—a stuffed figure had been made, and another out of Dick's.

The trousers were filled with dried tundra moss, so that they stood upright on the floor, and upon a stick which was run down into one of the legs, the coats and vests, also stuffed with moss, were hung, and a cap hung over the top of each pole.

These two figures faced each other, and looked like a pair of tailor's dummies.

Then Edith's clothes were all tied up in knots, and rolled into an immense wad, and tied with at least twenty strings.

Everything else was served in the same fantastic fashion, and naturally the boys did not like it very well.

"The man is surely mad!" declared Edith. "Why, my dress is ruined and as for my hat I shall simply have to throw it away."

"It looks like the work of a parcel of schoolboys," declared Young Klondike; "but where is that letter, Dick?"

"Here," said Dick, taking it off the table. "I found it sticking in the sleeve of your coat."

"I declare it's addressed to me!" exclaimed Ned. "It seems I am known, then. Well, we'll soon see what it's all about."

The letter was sealed in a yellow envelope and addressed to Young Klondike in a full round hand.

Ned tore it open, finding that it read as follows:

"YOUNG KLONDIKE:—Why don't you go to work? Why do you waste your time shooting ducks when there's work to be done? Your business is to dig for gold. I am your king and have a right to order you to go about your business. I do so order you. Go to work and dig. I'm tired of it. You'll find the hole near the white rock. Remember all the gold you dig belongs to me." GEORGE REX."

"Well, well! If that isn't the work of a madman I'll give up!" cried Ned. "In fact, everything here proves that the fellow is off his base."

"We can't doubt it," said Dick. "Well, the letter tells us his name, anyhow, and that is something."

"His first name, Dick?"

"Yes, and his last."

"No!"

"Doesn't it say George Rex?"

"Look here, Dick!" said Edith. "I thought you knew more than that. Rex means king."

"Pshaw! So it does! I did know it, but I'd forgotten. Say, Ned, there don't seem to be anything missing here as far as I can make out."

"Let's go right down to the white rock and see what there is in this letter," exclaimed Ned. "I have an idea we may meet him there."

"But where is this white rock? Have you any idea?"

"Not the faintest. I fancy we ought to be able to find it if it exists outside of the madman's mind."

But the white rock was easier found than they anticipated.

When they went out of the hut and took a look along the base of the cliffs, they could see ahead of them a great projecting rock which looked as if it was covered with snow.

"There you are!" cried Edith. "There's your white rock."

"It's a white rock, fast enough," said Ned, "but I don't see how one can expect to strike gold here at the edge of the swamp."

"Let's go over and see what it looks like," said Dick. "It can't do any harm."

So they all walked over to the place, and when they reached it, there, sure enough, was a shaft sunk some eighteen feet down, right at the foot of the rock.

A pick, a shovel, and other tools lay scattered about. There was also a rocker and several baskets for carrying earth.

"If one man dug that hole it took him a thundering long time," said Ned. "I must go down and see what the shaft is like."

"I don't see any trace of gold among the sand here," said Edith, poking about with a stick.

"Perhaps it's been already washed," suggested Dick.

"More than likely it has," replied Ned; "anyhow, we must have a look at the showing below. How in thunder is one to get down there? There doesn't seem to be any windlass nor any ladder. Dick, would you mind going back to the hut after a rope? I'll overhaul this sand a bit while you are gone."

"Certainly not," replied Dick, and away he went, and was soon back again with a good stout rope, of which there were several among the goods.

Ned made a noose and fastened it under his arms.

Dick wound the end of the rope around a stunted cedar tree which grew near by, and Young Klondike was lowered into the shaft.

"See anything?" called Edith, looking down.

"Why, no; not yet. There may be gold enough here, though. The sides of the shaft have kind of caved in and the dirt is frozen. I shall have to do a

little digging before I can tell what the show really is."

"What do you want? The pick?" called Dick.

"Yes, and the shovel. I'll go right at it. It isn't frozen very hard. It will be easy enough digging, I think."

Dick let down the pick and shovel and offered to come down himself and help.

"No, no! I can get along all right," said Ned. "Don't propose to do any great amount of work here anyhow; it's too late in the day for that."

So Ned seized the pick and went to work breaking up the fallen earth.

Some would have considered this good hard work, but Young Klondike was too well used to digging in frozen ground to have any such idea.

He soon had the loose clods broken up and shoveled to one side.

This exposed the wall of the shaft on the east, and Ned gave it but one look when he shouted out:

"A strike! A strike!"

"Gold!" cried Dick and Edith in a breath.

"You bet! mad that man may be, but there's method in his madness. There's gold here all right."

"Nuggets or dust? Or is it flake gold?"

"Why, I reckon it's all three. I can see the nuggets and the flake gold, but of course I can't see the dust."

"Can't you get some of it out?"

"Perhaps. It's mighty hard though."

"Shan't I come down and help?"

"No; I think we won't go much further. I'll take some of this out and we'll carry it up to the hut and thaw it. After dinner we'll do a little panning. Hello! Who is that shouting? The madman again?"

"No! It's the Unknown! He's coming. By gracious, I'm glad to see him back again, too! I was more than half afraid he'd get lost up there in the snow."

Thus saying Dick answered the Unknown's call, and in a few moments the detective had joined them at the mouth of the shaft.

"What in thunder are you fellows doing down here?" he demanded. "Mining again! Will this thing never stop?"

"We are trying to work the madman's mine," said Dick, "and Ned has just made a small strike."

"Good enough! Who's been at work in the hut? I see some one has been raising the very old mischief there?"

"We suppose it's the madman," said Edith, "but, of course, we can't actually tell. What about Pierre? Did you find any trace of the poor fellow, Zed?"

"Not the faintest. I prowled around in the snow for more than two hours. The wind has leveled everything off clean. All our tracks are obliterated, and it's just one smooth white field. There are plenty of holes in the cliffs where the poor fellow could have found shelter and he may have started back for the Relay House after the storm was over."

"In that case you would have found his tracks, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose so. Didn't see any sign of them, though. Still he may have gone along over the cliffs."

Now all this was rather unsatisfactory, and it cast a gloom over the whole party to feel that the unfortunate guide was probably dead.

But Ned did not stop working, and he soon had enough of the gold-bearing earth out to make his test.

This Dick hoisted up in a bucket and then Ned came out of the shaft, and they packed the frozen clods in the buckets up to the hut.

It was rich. There was no doubt about it. They could see the gold sticking out all over it. Ned, however, was determined to make a closer test than this.

They had made a small strike at the edge of the Great Swamp, and there was no telling what use they might wish to make of it later on.

There was a big tub outside the hut and this was taken in by the fire, filled with water and the frozen dirt dumped in.

"Now, then, let it stay and soak," said Ned. "I'm as hungry as a wolf, and we must have dinner. Time enough to do our panning afterward. Who knows but the madman may favor us with a call."

CHAPTER V.

THE MAD MINER SHOWS HIMSELF AGAIN.

"WHAT'S the matter with you, Dick? Don't you feel well?"

"Tired," said Dick. "Going without sleep last night did it, I suppose. I'm dead tired, that's all."

Dick had been rather dumpy during dinner, and now he leaned his head on his hand and closed his eyes.

"Get into one of the bunks and take a snooze," said Young Klondike. "You'll feel all right again after forty winks."

"I suppose I should."

"I'm sure you will. Try it."

"But how about the panning? I don't want to leave you to do that alone."

"Oh, Edith will help me out with the panning," declared Ned, and Dick turned into the bunk and was fast asleep in a moment.

The Unknown offered his services at the pan, but Ned would not have them, so he sat down by the table and watched Young Klondike and Edith as they did their work.

The earth was now entirely thawed, and had settled down into the bottom of the tub.

Ned scooped out a lot of it in the pan, and Edith held a pail to catch the water as he washed it out.

"There's gold here, plenty of it," declared Young

Klondike. "Some of these nuggets are really quite good size."

"Think it would pay to work that shaft, dear boy?" demanded the Unknown.

"I shouldn't wonder. Still it would interfere with our plans to remain here. Besides, I don't feel much like putting in time on another man's claim."

"That's what's the matter. You are ordered to do it by the king, though, and the king must be obeyed."

"Ahem! Yes! The king must be obeyed!" cried a voice at the window.

Of course, all eyes were turned in the direction of the sound. Even Dick was on the alert being awakened at once by the strange voice.

There stood the mad miner, still wearing his bearskin, the head hanging down over his shoulders.

He was a man of about forty years, dressed in a dirty buckskin suit, which could be seen beneath the bearskin.

His long hair hung down loosely over his shoulders, and his eyes gleamed strangely.

He carried a knotted club in his hand.

"Drop that pan!" shouted the strange figure, beginning to climb in at the window. "Drop that pan! I'm the king of the Klondike! All the gold in Alaska is mine, and you are thieves trying to rob me!"

"He's mad!" exclaimed the Unknown, seizing his rifle. "He's as mad as a March hare!"

Ned dropped the pan and threw himself in front of Edith. Dick sprang out of the bunk and seized his rifle, too.

But there seemed to be no necessity for the rifles, for the mad miner flung his club into one corner, and pressing his hands against his sides, burst out into a wild laugh.

"Come, come, neighbor! Brace up and give an account of yourself!" cried the detective. "Let's know who you are."

"I told you," replied the man, checking his laugh for the moment. "I'm the king of the Klondike! Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I salute your majesty," replied Ned, in a very serious tone, at the same time making a profound bow. "I have followed out your orders, you see. You told me to work, and I am working. I have dug out a lot of dirt and now I am going to wash it. The gold is yours, however. I'm not a thief, I assure you. Whatever comes out you shall have."

"Rats! Rubbish! Who's talking to you?" cried the man, who evidently had not the faintest recollection of the letter. "What do you all mean by taking possession of my house here? Are you going to pay me rent? I'm a business man. The rent of this house is a million dollars a month. I want my money now."

And the mad miner began pounding on the table to enforce his demand, his eyes blazing wildly.

Edith got away off into the corner, for he seemed to be particularly attracted by her pretty face.

"We must humor him," whispered the Unknown, and he walked up to the man and held out his hand.

"Why, how are you?" he exclaimed. "Never recognized you until now. Of course we'll pay. A million dollars is nothing to us, only we haven't got it with us. I'll write you a check."

"Come, that's the way to do business," exclaimed the man, shaking hands. "Are you going to stay here long? I ask because I expect my friends, the Duke of Greenland and the Emperor of Siberia, to dine with me this day week. I shall want the use of the kitchen fire then, because I have to roast a mastodon that I've caught, and am fattening up in the woods."

"Certainly," said the Unknown, with perfect gravity. "We'll get out that day. Shall I write you the check now?"

"I wish you would. I've got to pay my laundry bill, and it will come handy. I suppose you know the Emperor of China is doing my washing this winter? I believe I told you that before."

"Of course you did, but you didn't tell me your name; I shall have to write it in the check, you know."

"My name? Do you insist in having my name?"

"Well, isn't it necessary?"

"I don't know. Do you carry your name in your pocket? Do you give it to every tramp who asks for it? Say?"

The man thrust his face close to the Unknown's and seemed to be angry, but Ned and Dick could scarcely keep a straight face, for, in spite of the absurdity of these questions, they hit the Unknown hard.

"I lost my name about ten years ago," he replied, with the utmost gravity. "I haven't seen it since."

"And I left mine up on the rocks. I'll go and get it!" cried the madman. "By-by! See you later! Whoop! Here she goes!"

He sprang upon the table, and jumping down on the other side flung open the window and leaped out all in an instant.

The last they saw of him he was running up the rocks laughing wildly. They were able to follow him with their eyes for a few moments and then he disappeared.

"Well!" exclaimed Edith, "that was a visitation! The poor fellow is stark, staring mad!"

"No mistake about it," said Young Klondike. "You handled him well, Zed, I must say. It seems terrible. I wish we could do something for him, but I suppose there is no use thinking of that."

"I don't see what we can do for him," the detective replied; "he won't stand still an instant, and he can't keep his mind fixed upon one subject long enough to give an account of himself."

"Or tell his name," laughed Dick.

"Exactly."

"Of course he is mad. Any man who won't tell his name can't be anything else."

"Certainly not, dear boy. You are quite right."

You are not the first one who has told the old Unknown he was mad, and I don't think you will be the last!"

"Suppose you prove your sanity by telling your name now," suggested Ned. "You don't want to be classed with that poor wretch, I'm sure."

"I'll think of it, dear boy, but we must be moving. We can't fool away our time here."

"Don't know about that. This pan is pretty well loaded with gold."

Work was now resumed on the panning. The yield of dust, nuggets and flake gold was highly satisfactory.

Not a doubt existed that a rich claim could be developed there at the edge of the tundra.

But after due consideration it was decided to have nothing to do with it. Young Klondike had come into this desolate region for a definite purpose, and he did not wish to be turned away from it now.

"We'll start through the Great Swamp to-morrow," he declared just before they turned in for the night, which passed quietly. Ned, Dick and the Unknown took turns watching, but nothing occurred.

Young Klondike was the last on guard, and once away along toward morning he heard a wild cry up on the cliffs and thought the madman was coming, but he did not show himself, nor was the cry heard again.

Between half past five and six o'clock Ned, who was sitting by the fire at the time dozed off, something which he ought not to have done of course, and when he awoke he was greatly vexed to find that the Unknown had wakened up and gone out.

"Confound it! I shall never hear the last of that now," he thought. "Why couldn't I have kept awake just at that unfortunate time!"

He hurried out of the hut and shouted for the detective, but got no answer; breakfast was eaten without the detective, and when the sun rose he had not yet returned.

"Bother!" exclaimed Edith. "I wish Zed could have refrained from treating us to one of his mysterious disappearances just about this time. I wanted to see an early start into the swamp; we've got to pick our way, and it will be a bad business to get caught in the dark on the tundra and no place to camp for the night."

Now it should be mentioned that Pierre, the guide, assured them that they would be able to make the passage of the tundra between daylight and darkness.

Young Klondike expected to be clear of the Great Swamp before sundown and to reach Klopstock, the first mining camp on the old Russian diggings, shortly after dark.

But in order to do this it was necessary to start at once and, of course, they could not start without the Unknown.

"Well, there's no use in fooling away our time here," said Ned. "Of course we may as well go to work."

"I suppose so," replied Dick, "but what are you going to do with the gold you dig out of that shaft?"

"Keep it and use it to help this poor man. As soon as we reach Klopstock we will hire a party to return here and hunt him up and take him to Forty Mile where he can be comfortably cared for. The gold will probably pay all expenses, and if it don't I'll add more to it."

"A good idea," said Edith. "We'll work away just as though we were working for ourselves."

So they all returned to the shaft, and put in an hour hoisting pay dirt, and a second hour washing it out.

The yield was large. Young Klondike had a better opinion of the mine ever than before. As he and Dick stood talking about it while Edith was sewing up some small bags to carry the gold in, they were suddenly startled by hearing the Unknown's shout up on the cliffs.

"Look out for him! He's coming!" the detective cried.

Of course all eyes were turned in the direction of the cries, and up on top of the first ledge they saw the madman running for all he was worth, closely pursued by the Unknown.

He set up a wild yell as he caught sight of them, and with a quick movement of his arms, flung off the bearskin, running on without it, his long hair flying in the wind, while in his hand he clutched a small bag which seemed to contain gold.

The detective seized the bearskin and held it up.

"Look out for him, boys. He's mad!" yelled the Unknown.

He had no more than spoken, when the wild looking man who had shed the bearskin leaped off the rock.

"It is gold! Gold!" he shouted, waving the bag. "I'm the king of the Klondike! I'm the richest man on earth!"

"We won't shoot unless we have to!" cried Ned, flinging up his rifle to be prepared for the worst.

"Stop him! Stop him!" shouted the detective. "Don't hurt the poor wretch, but stop him if you can."

This, however, was something easier said than done. The mad miner ran like a deer, steering away from the boys and making for the tundra.

Ned tried to intercept him, but it was no use,

Unless he fired there was no such thing as stopping the man.

An instant later and he gained the tundra, where he plunged in among the moss and disappeared.

"There!" cried the Unknown, "that's my luck again. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I thought I had my man, and now just at the last moment he escapes."

"I couldn't help it!" answered Ned. "Don't blame me. How was I to know that you were going to chase him down here just at this particular time?"

The Unknown jumped down off the rock and came up panting.

"Sure enough. I suppose you could not know," he

said. "Ye gods and little fishes! I set my heart on solving this mystery, but I see it is not to be."

"You've got his bearskin, anyway," said Edith. "I'm sorry for that. The poor fellow will freeze to death without it."

"And don't blame me for that," said the detective. "How was I to know that he was going to throw it off?"

"What I blame you for, Zed, is because you will go off without letting us know," said Ned. "Here it is almost noon, and we are still fooling here, while we ought by rights to be five miles down the swamp."

"I didn't intend to be gone so long," said the Unknown. "I got on his trail and followed it. Came upon him under the rocks away up on the side of the mountain. As soon as he saw me he gave one yell and started off on the run. I chased him down here, and you know the rest. Ye gods and little fishes, I'm all winded, and all for nothing, too!"

"Did he have the bag of gold in his hand when you saw him first?" Ned asked.

"Yes, he did," replied the detective. "He was looking into it. I think his madness must run that way. I suppose he thought of nothing but gold until he went looney. That's the way I account for it, at all events."

"But where has he gone now?" asked Edith. "He'll drown himself in the tundra. More than likely he'll tumble into one of the slews."

But even allowing that such was the case there seemed no chance of doing anything.

Some search was made for the madman, but it came to nothing, and a little later Young Klondike's party started off on their journey through the Great Swamp.

It was late—too late entirely to attempt it, but Ned was determined and would listen to nothing.

"We shall be able to find our way, I'm sure," he declared, "and I can't hear to any further delay. Those mountain peaks over there lie just back of the old Russian diggings Pierre told me. They will be our guides, and if we keep them constantly in view I don't see how we are going to get lost."

So the goods were loaded into the boat and the start down the slew began.

It was dreary work pulling along between those two great walls of moss, but this was what they had to expect now for some hours to come, so they all made the best of it, and Ned and Dick buckling down to business, sent the heavily loaded boat flying along the slew.

CHAPTER VI.

LOST IN THE GREAT SWAMP.

"THERE goes the sun, Ned. We shall have to tie up soon, now."

Dick Luckey was standing up in the boat looking off over the tundra.

The sun, as red as blood, was just sinking below the horizon.

It was moss, moss everywhere, as far as the eye could reach, until it penetrated into the dim distance, and there were the snow-capped mountains, further off than ever, seemingly, and yet Young Klondike's party had been rowing steadily all the afternoon.

Ned made no reply. Edith watched his face anxiously. The Unknown was whistling a tune, and seemed to be trying hard to keep his spirits up.

"What's the matter with you all?" cried Dick. "Usually I'm the one to get the blues, but on this occasion I seem to be the only one who hasn't got them. Ned, do you give up?"

"Yes," said Ned, "I do give up. Friends, there's no doubt about it. We are lost in the Great Swamp."

"Pitch him overboard! By the Jumping Jeremiah, pitch him overboard!" cried the Unknown. "We won't have a croaker among us, even if it is Young Klondike himself."

"Time!" exclaimed Ned. "It's——"

"It's all my fault!" broke in the Unknown. "I know what you are going to say! Out with it! It's all my fault. If I hadn't gone after the mad miner we would be in sight of Klopstock at the present moment. Isn't that it?"

"Wrong!" cried Ned. "No, it isn't it at all. What I was about to remark was that it's time we came to some conclusion. Here we've been rowing about aimlessly for the past hour. We are out of the main slew, and we have been through so many cross slews that to expect to find our way back to it is hopeless, night is coming on, and as Dick very truly remarks we have all got the blues, and why not? We are lost in the Great Swamp."

"There! That will do!" cried the Unknown. "Now, don't say any more; good will come out of this. I shouldn't wonder a bit if it led to our making a big strike."

"Gold here in the swamp, eh?" laughed Ned. "You are more credulous than I thought you were. No, no; we need not expect that!"

"And why not?"

"It isn't possible."

"Wasn't there a man about your size, who read me a mining lecture the other day? Didn't you tell me that these swamps were the latest kind of formation, and that the gold-bearing sand underlies them all?"

"Certainly I did, but are we to burrow down through the moss and mud to make a strike? Zed, don't you be a fool!"

"There! That's a sockdolager!" cried the Unknown, good-humoredly. "After that I haven't a word to say except this: I'm going to hope in spite of you, and you can't stop me, try how you will."

But in spite of the Unknown's efforts to keep their spirits up, and that was just all his conversation amounted to, the startling fact remained.

Young Klondike's party had missed their way. They were lost in the Great Swamp.

It soon grew dark, but the boys kept steadily rowing in spite of their great fatigue.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to just let the boat drift and go to sleep, taking up their journey again in the morning.

This plan Ned proposed to adopt later. He determined to keep on rowing as long as he could.

"Edith, you go to sleep," he said. "Make yourself as comfortable as you can, and we will keep on going until midnight. If we don't strike anything then we'll give up and let her drift till morning, and then try it again."

"I'd rather take my turn rowing," replied Edith. "I'm fresh compared to you."

"So am I," put in the Unknown, who had not spoken in some time.

"Of course, you are," said Ned. "You always were, you know."

"Now, then, now, then! Still down on the poor Unknown?"

"I'm not down on anybody, but why don't you suggest something."

"Which is as much as to say that I got you into this scrape and ought to get you out."

"Well!"

"Am I right?"

"Perhaps."

"Good enough. Now I'll make a suggestion. Take the next slew to the left and go that way."

"But that will take us away from the mountains we are heading for."

"Exactly."

"You can't really mean for us to do that?"

"I do mean it."

"And why?"

"Because it is my belief that those are the wrong mountains. We have become completely turned around, and are working back the way we came."

"He's right!" cried Dick. "Zed is right. Those are the mountains we left behind us. We've worked round in a circle without knowing it."

"Motion accepted and suggestion to be followed!" exclaimed Ned, cheerfully. "Into the next left-hand slew we go!"

"There'll be luck from this moment!" cried the detective, "and— By the Jumping Jeremiah, what's that? A change is coming now!"

It was a strange cry heard in the distance over the tundra. Whether it was the cry of some night bird or some other animal, or whether it came from a human throat, Young Klondike could not tell.

"Really that is very remarkable!" he exclaimed. "What can it mean?"

"Don't ask me," replied the Unknown. "Here we've been going along on a dead level so to speak, for hours, and now, just as soon as you express your willingness to take my valuable advice, the change comes. Ha! There it goes again. We ought to know what that means!"

"The madman!" cried Ned and Dick in one breath, for the cry now repeated was distinctly human.

It was a wild, mad laugh. Three times it rang out over the tundra and once more all was still.

The boys threw new life into their rowing, and the boat shot ahead with redoubled speed.

They had not gone far before they came to a cross slew on their left, and true to his resolve to follow the Unknown's advice blindly, Young Klondike turned the boat into it.

Soon the detective gave a satisfied chuckle, which showed that there was something else on his mind.

"What now, Zed?" demanded Young Klondike. "Spit it out."

"Why, here's a discovery!" cried the detective, looking over the side of the boat, "don't you see?" "No; I'll be hanged if I do."

"I can't see anything, either," said Dick. "Zed, I haven't the most remote idea what you mean."

"Why, there's a current here!" cried the Unknown. "That's what. A distinct current; the first we've seen since we started in on the slews."

"I declare there is," said Ned, after a little. "I should never have noticed it, though."

"Oh, it's here, all right. Nothing very swift about it, but it's a current just the same."

"And what does that imply, Zed?" demanded Edith. "I don't just see what you are driving at, I must say."

"Why, it's plain enough," said the detective. "It implies that there is a body of moving water somewhere near here, of which this slew is the outlet."

"I wonder if it can be the Great Swamp lake?" exclaimed Ned. "Pierre told me about it. He said that there was a lake here in the swamp and islands on it, and that a gang of toughs and outlaws, who were driven out of Dawson City last spring had taken refuge here, and were supporting themselves by hunting and fishing and robbing travelers between Jake's and the old Russian diggings."

"Hello!" cried the Unknown. "You never mentioned that before."

"No, because I did not want to worry Edith. It's time enough to tackle trouble when you meet it. I meant to tell you at the first alarm."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, that's what we've got ahead of us then. It's the great lake sure. Had we better turn back?"

"No, decidedly not. What do we care for those fellows? We are quite able to defend ourselves. There are islands in the lake and on one of them we can camp for the night."

They pulled on steadily, continuing to discuss the situation. The current in the slew seemed to grow stronger. For a time they heard no more of the strange cry, but at last it came again and this time so close to them that all were startled.

"Too—hoo! Too—hoo! I'm the king of the Klondike!" rang out upon the still night air.

"The mad miner!" cried Edith.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, that's what!" echoed the detective, "and there he is!"

At the same instant a small boat suddenly shot across the slew at a little distance ahead.

The moon had now risen, and there was light enough to see the long-haired figure who plied the paddle.

It was the mad miner, sure enough!

He waved his hand to them, shouting:

"This way, my faithful subjects! Your king commands it! This way and I'll make you all millionaires!"

Then the boat passed into the tundra and was lost to view.

"Shall we follow him?" cried Ned.

"Decidedly," replied the detective.

"But he may lead us into trouble."

"It is possible. On the other hand he evidently knows the lay of the swamp, and may help us to work out of the trouble we are already in."

They pulled on briskly, coming in a moment to a cross slew, just as they had supposed would be the case.

Looking along the narrow opening through the moss, they could see nothing of the mad miner, but they could still hear him calling out in that same strange fashion, although they could no longer distinguish words.

"We'll follow right on," said the detective. "See, the current is here, too, and this slew works round in a semicircle, and practically comes from the same direction as the other. I haven't the least doubt that the lake is near."

And so it proved. In a few moments they shot clear of the tundra.

A broad sheet of water, studded with many islands, lay before them, but the mad miner was nowhere to be seen.

"Come! This is better at all events!" cried the detective. "We'll make for that island where the trees are and go into camp for the night."

Soon they were at the island, and Ned and Dick pulled the boat up on the shore.

It was certainly a great relief from that everlasting aimless rowing, but the situation was but little changed in reality.

Young Klondike and his friends were still lost in the Great Swamp.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT STRIKE ON THE ISLAND.

"Up, Dick, up! It's almost sunrise. There's lots of work to be done!"

Dick, who was slumbering under the brush shelter which had been hastily constructed the night before, sprang up, and began rubbing his eyes.

"Hello, Ned! What made you let me sleep so?"

he exclaimed. "Why, I declare it's almost daylight! Don't you mean to move out of this?"

"Not to-day, Dick. The programme has changed."

"What, what? Have you given up the idea of going on to the old Russian diggings?"

"For the present, yes."

"Humph! That can only mean one thing. You've made a strike."

"Yes and no. I've struck a good prospect, but I can't say I've made a strike."

"Just as I expected. It's always our luck. Where's Edith and the Unknown?"

"Over on the other island."

"Cruising about the lake while I slept, eh? Well, that I call hardly a fair shake. You know well enough that I want to do my share of the work."

"But you were so tired, Dick, we decided to let you sleep."

Dick went down to the water's edge and washed his face and hands. All the time he was doing it his eyes were roaming among the other islands. He was trying to locate Edith and the Unknown, and at last he succeeded.

"They are over there!" he exclaimed, pointing to an island at no great distance away.

"Yes," replied Ned.

"What took them there? What do you know?"

"Why, it's the mad miner again," replied Ned. "Between two and three o'clock this morning he suddenly made us one of his queer calls."

"Here?"

"No; we heard him on that island. I was watching at the time—it was shortly after you had turned in—and his cry awakened the Unknown. We couldn't make out exactly what he said at first, and then he came down to the shore and yelled out plain enough: 'Dig here, and you'll all be millionaires.'"

"And then I'll warrant he disappeared."

"That's what he did, Dick, and where he went to or how he ever got on the island in the first place, we haven't the faintest idea."

"And you went over there?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you wait for daylight?"

"Why, on account of the fire, to be sure."

There was a big fire blazing away on the island, and Ned went on to explain how they had suddenly seen it blaze up shortly after the mad miner disappeared.

"There can't be the least doubt but what he lighted it," he added. "He's a mysterious creature. There was the wood all piled up and blazing away like a house afire when we got there. We've kept the fire going ever since, and it isn't going to take us long to get down to business, as you will see when we get over there. Come, let's go now. We've moved all our stuff over to that island except your belongings and we'll take those now."

There was a mysterious twinkle in Ned's eye as Dick got into the boat, which made his partner feel sure that he was keeping something back.

"You've got a surprise for me, old man," he remarked, as they rowed along over the lake.

"Who was telling you?" demanded Ned. "What makes you say that?"

"I can read it in your face."

"Well, then, you read my face right, Dick. I have got a surprise."

"I knew it. What is it?"

"Gold!"

"A strike already? I thought you said—"

"Wait! Here we are, you shall see for yourself. Here comes Edith and the Unknown to see how you take it. Now, then, prepare to be surprised."

The boat had reached the shore of the other island by this time, and Dick could see that the fire was burning down in the bottom of a gully, which seemed to extend entirely across the wooded islet.

He knew what that meant well enough.

Here was just as much digging saved as the gully had depth, and if gold was to be found at all it might be expected to make a strike at a depth of a few feet.

To understand this it is necessary to know a little about the way gold is usually discovered in the Klondike country.

It does not occur in quartz veins as is the case in California and other places. Oh, no! In the Klondike the conditions are very different.

Here the gold is found in black sand at a depth of about twenty feet below the top soil.

Sometimes it is only fifteen, sixteen or seventeen feet down; at others it runs twenty-two, or even as much as twenty-five, but the average is about twenty, as we have said.

Now, it would seem an easy task to dig a hole twenty feet deep and strike this gold sheet, and so it would be if the ground was not always frozen to a depth of from four to six feet.

Even the summer sun is not strong enough to bring the frost out of the ground in most parts of Alaska, so the usual way is to build a frost fire and melt it out, but here in the gully which was already down some fourteen feet below the level, gold could be looked for at the limit of the frost, or a trifle beyond it. In short, from three to five feet was all that it would be necessary to dig in order to fully demonstrate the value of this prospect.

"It's a good chance if there is any chance at all!" cried Dick. "We ought to be able to settle this thing up in one day."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, it's settled now!" roared the Unknown, catching this remark of Dick's as they came ashore. "Didn't you tell him about it, Ned?"

"There! Now you've spoiled the surprise I had in waiting for Dick," said Young Klondike. "No use to try to keep secrets. There it is, Dick!"

Dick's eyes opened wide as Ned pointed to a clump of trees near by, for he saw that what he had taken for a stone lying under one of the trees was simply a nugget of tremendous size.

This was Young Klondike's surprise. He explained

that they found it in the gully, a short time after they landed.

"And that's what the mad miner did for us, Dick," said Edith. "Positively I begin to suspect that he may not be so very much mad after all."

"Why, it's great!" said Dick, turning the nugget over. "And you mean to say that you found this thing lying right there in the gully?"

"That's what we did," replied the detective, "and I've been up and down that same gully about a hundred and forty-four times since, but not a trace of a nugget can I find."

"Big nuggets don't grow on every bush," said Young Klondike. "Do you blame me now for changing my mind, Dick?"

"Not a bit of it."

"Don't you think it is better for us to stay here than to go on to Klopstock?"

"Till we've proved the value of these diggings, decidedly. We may be able to go on to the old Russian diggings some other trip, but if we have any luck here on the island I suppose you'll turn back?"

"Decidedly. In fact, I think we'd better go back with the nuggets, even if we don't find anything else."

Dick was of the same opinion, and the last question he asked about the matter was how much Ned considered the big nugget worth.

Now, this was a question very difficult to answer, for like most of these big nuggets, this one was mixed with quartz rock and hardened sand.

The explanation of this is found in the fact that all gold originally occurs in quartz veins. Convulsions of nature in the past have broken the rocks in which these veins occur, and great floods have washed the loosened gold down into the valleys and on to the low lands in the various forms in which it is found.

Once in awhile a big piece of the old vein rock remains unbroken, with the gold bristling out all over it.

Such was Young Klondike's big nugget. Probably it was eighty per cent. gold. On the other hand, big nuggets have been found in California almost pure.

Ned thought that this nugget ought to run up to about fifteen thousand dollars value.

In the same connection it may be mentioned that a big nugget was found in the early days of California, which panned out thirty-three thousand dollars. We are not aware that any larger nugget than this was ever found.

But Young Klondike's nugget was big enough to make him feel every ambition to push operations in the gully, and all that day and the next and the one following, our friends continued work on their new prospect.

The frost ran a little deeper than they expected, and took a day and a half to thaw out.

Then, when they began to dig, they found that a lot of clay had been washed down into the gully, which had to be removed.

This took them down about six feet, and as the clay was firmly bedded, it proved very hard digging.

After they got through the clay the black sand began to appear, and toward night, on the third day, the first trace of color appeared in the pan.

Young Klondike washed out four or five pansful, and the yield was about a hundred dollars.

"We've certainly struck it," he declared, as they sat down to supper that night in one of the brush shelters which had been built on the bluff overlooking the lake. "It's my opinion that to-morrow will be one of the most successful days we ever put in."

"If something don't turn up to stop us off on the work," said the Unknown. "It's pretty apt to be our luck to have things run that way."

But the Unknown's croaking went for nothing.

Next day the weather still held fine and everything went as smoothly as possible.

The results were startling.

By noon, Ned, who kept right on digging while Dick and the others did the hoisting and washing, ran into a nest of small nuggets which promised to prove almost inexhaustible.

The hoisting of the pay dirt previously dug was then stopped and all hands gave their attention to this new find.

The result was that by the time the sun went down over the Great Swamp nearly ten thousand dollars in gold had been worked out of the shaft in the gully.

It was no longer a prospect, that hole on the island, it was a mine.

Young Klondike had made a big strike once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE CRIES IN THE NIGHT.

ALL this time nothing had been seen or heard of the mad miner, but Young Klondike was destined to have another remarkable experience with him before any more gold digging was done.

It happened about twelve o'clock. Ned was on the watch, as no night was allowed to pass without strict guard being kept.

So far nothing had been seen nor heard of the gang of toughs which was said to make its headquarters in the Great Swamp, and Young Klondike was almost inclined to doubt their existence; nevertheless on the ground that eternal vigilance is the price of safety he insisted upon the watch being kept up.

It was a beautiful night, bright moonlight, but even the lunar radiance could not altogether dim the luster of the Arctic stars.

As Ned paced up and down the bluff he thought he had never seen such a night, and he fell into a sort of waking dream, pondering upon all the wonderful adventures that had befallen him since he came to the Klondike.

As far as gold was concerned these boys had long since acquired enough to satisfy anyone. It was the

love of adventure which kept them still in the country. In spite of its many hardships they had grown used to their life and were not inclined to change.

"I must really take a run down to New York next winter," thought Ned. "There's lots of people I want to see there, and besides I'd like to see how the old place looks."

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind when his attention was suddenly attracted to a light which appeared on the other side of the lake right at the edge of the swamp.

"What in thunder is that?" murmured Ned. "Can it be that the madman is going to pay us a visit again."

For fully five minutes he watched the light.

It seemed to remain stationary. One might almost have supposed that somebody was over there fishing, but strain his eyes as he would, Ned could see no sign of a boat.

He was just about to call Dick, who was next on the watch, when the light began to move toward the island, and at the same moment as many as a dozen shots were heard ringing out over the tundra, and mingled with the sounds came wild cries, strangely mournful and pleading.

They were in many voices, too, and some seemed to be the cries of women.

All this time the light was advancing rapidly. The cries came from far beyond it, but Ned still could see no boat.

Puzzled beyond measure, for the shots were still heard occasionally, and the cries kept right up, he ran to the shelter and aroused Dick, hastily explaining what was going on.

Indeed, it was scarcely necessary to explain the situation, for the cries were very distinct.

"There's something going on over there, sure!" exclaimed Dick. "It can't be the madman, Ned! There's at least a dozen voices. What can it mean?"

"I'm sure I'll never tell you!" answered Ned. "Let's get the boat and make for the light."

"I'm agreeable. It won't take us long to come up with it, either; it seems to be coming this way pretty fast."

"That's what it does. It must be a boat, Dick, and yet I can't make it out."

But this part of the mystery was solved in a moment, for when they got down upon the shore where their own boat lay they could see the other craft distinctly.

It was a small skiff low down upon the water with one man paddling.

A lantern burned in the bows, but it was so placed that the light struck down upon the water instead of outward away from the boat, and it was this fact that prevented it from being seen.

"That's the mad miner!" cried Dick. "I'm sure of it. They don't seem to be firing over there just now."

"No; the firing has stopped. Don't seem to be any let up in the cries, though."

Oddly enough just as Young Klondike made this remark the cries ceased, too.

Now, the boys had nothing to do but to give their full attention to the man in the boat.

His back was turned toward them, but as near as they could see he bore a strange resemblance to the mad miner.

"Shall we give him the call?" cried Dick. "He don't seem to see us. It would be just as well if he did."

"Yes; suppose you do," replied Ned, and Dick gave a loud "hello."

The man in the boat made a violent start, looked around, and at the same instant lost his balance and over went the skiff, landing him in the water.

"Help! Help!" he shouted. "Cramps! I'm drowning! Help me, whoever you are!"

It did not take Ned and Dick very long to go to the rescue, you may be sure.

Pulling for all they were worth they were soon alongside the overturned boat, to which the man was clinging.

It was the mad miner, but he now wore a curious fur cap, and when he spoke his voice had altogether a different sound.

"Help me, pard!" he called. "I can swim well enough, but the cramp has caught me. If you will take me into your boat I can easy right the skiff."

"Sure we will!" cried Ned. "Come right in here! Take my hand! Don't you know who I am?"

The man stared.

"You are Young Klondike if I don't greatly mistake," he said. "I saw you in Dawson City a year ago."

"You've seen me since then," said Ned, pulling him into the boat. "Stop and think. Don't you remember meeting me in that hut?"

The mad miner had now righted the skiff and made it fast to Young Klondike's boat.

Lighting his lantern which had gone out when the boat overturned, he flashed it into the boys' faces and looked hard at them.

"No," he said slowly. "I don't remember ever seeing you in my hut, but then you must make allowances for me, gentlemen. My head is queer at times, and I find it very hard to remember. Perhaps you may not believe it, but I've no idea how I came to be here. I'm lost in the Great Swamp."

"Why, for that matter so are we," replied Ned, kindly.

He saw that even if the man had been mad when they last saw him, he certainly was not so now.

"Perhaps this is a case where madness comes and goes," thought Young Klondike. "Poor fellow! We'll treat him kindly. Certainly we owe a lot to him, and if he is sane now part of the gold we've been digging belongs to him."

"Don't bother your head about it," he said, aloud. "Yes, I'm Young Klondike, and this is my partner, Dick Luckey. Perhaps you'll tell me your name?"

"Oh, I'm George Pomeroy," replied the man. "I belong in Chicago, and I wish I was there now."

He spoke in a low voice, and seemed very much depressed. As he showed no particular disposition to continue the conversation, Young Klondike scarcely knew what reply to make, and they pulled in silence toward the island.

"If I let him alone perhaps he will tell me more," thought Ned, and so it proved, for just before they reached the shore the man suddenly burst out with:

"Oh, there's no use talking, boys; if you've seen me before you probably know what's the matter with me. You know I'm mad at times."

"You certainly were a little excited last time I saw you, Mr. Pomeroy," replied Ned, quietly; "but you seem to be all right now."

"Yes, for the moment, but it will come right back again."

"The mad fit?"

"Yes. Boys, it is terrible. I am liable to find myself anywhere next time I come to my senses. I may be away up in the mountains or miles and miles away from here in some other part of the Great Swamp. I might wake up in the hut or away over in the old Russian diggings, I can never tell. For more than a year I have been trying to get back to Dawson City, but I can't do it. I never got any nearer than Jake's Relay House. I went to sleep there one night last summer intending to start down for Forty Mile in the morning and where do you suppose I was when I woke up?"

"I'm sure I've no idea," replied Ned, sympathetically.

"Away up in the mountains back of Klopstock, hungry, sick, all used up. In a terrible state, in fact. Well, I wandered down to a mining camp back of Klopstock, and started across the swamp with a party of miners going out. Was it any use? Not a bit of it. One night I woke up lying in the tundra, and it was days and days before I got out of that snap. I found this boat then. Somehow or other I seem to go right back to it every time one of my spells comes on, although I've come out of them a dozen times since, and without the faintest idea where the boat lay. Good Lord, it's terrible, boys! I wish you'd kill me! I'd be a great deal better off dead!"

"Nonsense!" cried Ned. "Don't take such a gloomy view of the matter. You may never have one of these spells again. Have you done any mining? Have you any gold?"

"Yes, I've done a lot of mining in my time, and some since these spells came on me," replied Pomeroy. "I mined up by the hut you speak of and had some luck, but I don't know where the gold is. I presume I buried it somewhere, but I'm sure I don't know."

It was a sad case. Young Klondike and Dick were deeply moved.

Wisely, Ned concluded not to go into any explanations about their previous meetings, and he made Dick understand his intentions by a few whispered words.

"Where were you when you came to your senses this time, Mr. Pomeroy?" he asked.

"Over there on the other side of the lake. I was lying in the boat listening to shots, and there seemed to be a lot of people hollering. I sprang up in a hurry, and then seeing the light on the island there where I judge your camp is, I made for it. Didn't hear anything more of the shots or the shouts, either, so I suppose they were all part of my mad dream."

"But indeed they were not!" exclaimed Ned. "We heard them, too, and I'm most anxious to know what they mean. You must dry yourself by the fire, though. If it wasn't for that, I—hello! There are the cries again!"

Several shouts were now heard in the distance. They seemed to be cries of distress, but there was no distinguishing words.

"Can you make out what they are saying?" demanded Dick.

"Not at all," said Ned. "We'll wake up the Unknown and turn Mr. Pomeroy over to him, and then get out there by the edge of the swamp and see if we can find out what all this means."

"Don't! Please don't!" pleaded the mad miner, growing excited at once. "I don't know who you mean by the Unknown, but I don't want to meet anybody. It always makes me worse to meet strangers. I'm getting along all right now, let me stay with you."

"But you are all wet. You must change your clothes."

"Nonsense! I'm wet and dry a dozen times a day, like enough. I never think of such things."

"Probably you are hungry—"

"Young man, I haven't known what it was to take a regular meal in a year. I don't feel at all hungry now. When I do I shall look about for something to eat."

He seemed to be growing more and more excited, so Ned wisely dropped the subject.

The strange cries still continued, and as Pomeroy began urging them to go right ahead and investigate just as they would do if he was not with them, Ned turned the canoe in the direction of the sounds.

A short row brought them to the edge of the tundra.

There was a slew here leading back into the swamp, and as the cries seemed to come from that, Young Klondike pulled into it.

Soon they could hear the voices more distinctly.

There seemed to be a man and a woman shouting alternately. They were evidently calling for help, and after a few moments the boys could make out the words:

"We are lost! We are lost! We are lost in the swamp!"

Dick answered again and again, but although Dick's voice was quite as powerful as anyone's, it seemed impossible for him to make himself heard.

They pulled on and on, but seemed to come no nearer to the cries.

There was something almost uncanny about it.

For a long distance now the sounds had kept right abreast of them. They passed the entrance to several cross slews, but as there seemed to be no particular reason for turning into any of them they did not do it. In fact, they were afraid of losing themselves.

"I'll tell you what's the matter, boys!" cried Pomeroy, at last, "we are going around in a circle, and those people are inside of it. Poor wretches! Something must be done to help them. Probably it's a party on their way to the old Russian diggings. We must go back! We must strike across. There's no use in this sort of business. We—coming! Coming! I'll help you! I'll save you! Never say die!"

More and more excited the mad miner's speech had become.

Now all at once he sprang up in the boat and began waving his arms wildly.

"Sit down! Sit down!" cried Dick, excitedly. "You'll upset the boat!"

Evidently this was all that was needed to finish the business.

Suddenly the mad miner gave a wild shout.

"The king of the Klondike is coming!" he yelled, and with one leap he went clear of the boat and landed in the tundra.

They saw him sink in among the moss, heard him for a moment splashing through the mud and then all was still.

Even the strange cries had ceased.

"Pomeroy! Mr. Pomeroy, come back to the boat!" shouted Ned and Dick.

But their cries were all in vain.

Not a sound broke the stillness of the night.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ENEMY VISITS THE ISLAND.

"COME, this is a bad job!" cried Ned. "That poor wretch has undoubtedly gone down into the mud."

"What are we to do?" demanded Dick. "This seems terrible! I can't make up my mind to pull away and leave him so."

"What can we do? I'm sure we can pull the boat into the tundra itself. You can see there isn't standing room for anybody in there, either. I tell you it is a bad job."

They pushed about here and there, trying to force the boat in among the tall moss, calling and shouting, but all in vain.

Not the least sound was heard in answer.

The mystery of the tundra had grown more mysterious than ever.

Reluctantly, Young Klondike and Dick were forced to the only conclusion it seemed possible to draw. They could no longer doubt that the madman was dead.

"Poor wretch! That's the end of him," exclaimed

Dick at last. "Well, Ned, there's no use hanging about here any longer. We may as well get back to the island, it seems to me."

"Nothing else to be done," replied Ned. "It's a terrible thing this; and as for those poor souls who were shouting for help, I can't imagine anything else but to think that they must have gone down into the mud, too."

"There's one thing we might do for Pomeroy," said Dick.

"What's that?"

"Leave his boat behind. It may be that he still lives."

"We'll do it. We'll come up here again by daylight, too. I'd stay longer now if I thought it would do any good."

"But it won't; not a bit. Besides, we ought to get back to Edith and the Unknown. I don't like the idea of leaving them alone there. Something or other will be sure to happen."

They unfastened the skiff, and driving its bow in among the moss, started to return, and after a little reached the lake.

The light of their fire could still be seen on the island, and it served to guide the boys back.

They were about half way across when they were suddenly startled by hearing several shots proceeding from the direction of the island.

Lights flashed. They could hear a wild shouting and see a number of dark figures running about on the bluff.

"Good Heavens! what's all that?" cried Young Klondike. "Does it mean an attack on our camp?"

"That's what it does, and don't you forget it!" replied Dick. "Pull, Ned, pull! We never ought to have left them alone."

They pulled for the island in great excitement, but after a minute the flashing lights vanished and the shots were heard no more.

"We are in for more trouble, Dick," remarked Ned, gloomily.

"Upon my word it looks that way. Can you see anything now?"

"Nothing but the remains of our camp fire."

"Hello! I see the Unknown!"

The little detective had just appeared on the edge of the bluff.

The camp fire was behind him, and this threw his figure out pretty plainly. He seemed to be looking off on the lake.

Dick gave him the call and after a moment succeeded in making himself heard.

"Hello! Hello! Are you coming in or are you going to stay out there all night!" yelled the Unknown, waving his arms in quite as excited a manner as the mad miner had done.

"We're coming! We are coming!" shouted Ned. "What's the matter? Has anything gone wrong?"

The detective threw up his hands and made a gesture of despair.

It was quite evident that everything had gone

wrong. They saw him pull off the old plug hat and strike it against the ground, and then jam it on his head again, stick his hands into his pockets and go pacing up and down the bluff.

Soon they were close enough to question him, and the Unknown's first words told them the worst.

"Dear boy, how could you go off guard?" he shouted. "A terrible thing has happened while I slept."

"It's Edith!" gasped Ned. "Oh, Dick! I shall never forgive myself now."

And this was just the story the Unknown's words told.

"There's been a gang here! They've carried off Edith and every bit of our gold!" he yelled. "Shall I shoot you, or will you shoot me? By the Jumping Jeremiah, one of us deserves to die for this!"

"Hush! Hush! Don't get so excited, Zed!" cried Young Klondike. "Take it easy. We'll undo the mischief. Where have these people gone?"

"Into the tundra on the other side of the island. Oh, it's of no use to try to follow them. I don't believe you could ever trace them out in the world."

Ned hardly knew what to say. In fact, he was almost too much overcome to speak. As for Dick, he was much in the same condition, and he gave vent to his feelings by throwing extra energy into his oar.

In a few moments they had landed on the island and heard the Unknown's startling story, telling in return what had happened to themselves.

It appeared that the detective had been suddenly wakened out of a sound sleep by hearing Edith call for help.

Springing up, he ran out of the shelter and exchanged shots with a half dozen men who were on the bluff, in the very act of carrying off the gold.

One of the enemy's shots grazed his forehead, inflicting a slight scalp wound, and in the excitement of the moment, believing himself to be more seriously injured than he was, the detective stumbled and managed to tumble over the bluff, and the next he knew he was lying half stunned on the shore.

He picked himself up and ran around to the other side of the island to have a look after the boats.

It was then too late to do anything. The boats were almost over to the tundra, and following them with his eye the detective soon saw them disappear among the moss.

"And that's all there is about it, boys," he wound up by saying. "When I went to look for the gold it had all vanished, even to the big nugget. Only thing I blame you for, though, is not waking me up before you left the island. If you had only done that all this trouble would have been saved."

Ned had no words to express his sorrow.

Fact was he had never once thought of waking the Unknown, but then he had not expected to be gone any length of time.

"It's a bad job, but we must make the best of it," he declared. "Come on board, Zed. Of course, we start right out after Edith now."

It was a melancholy trio that pulled over to the tundra in that early morning hour.

They spoke in low tones, and after the first explanations were over scarcely at all.

When they reached the edge of the swamp, as near as possible to the place where the Unknown thought Edith had disappeared, Ned shipped his oar and threw it down across the seats in a discouraged way.

"It's like looking for a needle in a haystack," he groaned. "It was bad enough searching for the mad miner up there in the swamps, but this is a great deal worse."

"Don't utter one despairing word, dear boy!" exclaimed the Unknown; "if you do you will break my heart. Edith must be found."

"And so she shall be!" cried Ned. "I don't despair—I won't—I mustn't! But the question is what to do."

"I assume that those fellows who made the attack must be the gang we heard of," said the Unknown.

"Of course," replied Dick. "Do you know what has occurred to me? I've been thinking that our friend Pomeroy may not be so mad as he seems; that it was all a trick to lure us away from the camp and give these scoundrels the chance to get in their fine work."

"I don't believe it! I can't believe it!" cried Ned.

"No, Dick is wrong," said the detective. "I'll swear that man was mad when I saw him. I don't know what he may be now."

"What we want is to give our whole mind to the rescue of Edith," declared Ned. "The recovery of the gold is of trifling importance compared with that."

But Young Klondike need scarcely have wasted his breath in so saying, for all were of one mind in this regard. Only question was how to act.

"It can be done," said the Unknown, "and by the Jumping Jeremiah, it must be done. Do you know I think we have made a big mistake."

"In what?"

"In coming here at all."

"What in the world do you mean, Zed? Didn't you say to us that the toughs came this way?"

"Well, I did."

"Then what's the matter with this being the way for us to come?"

"Listen! Listen! Let me speak if you love me. We have made a mistake."

"Wherein, I say?"

"No use! He won't let me speak, Dick," cried the Unknown, helplessly.

"Nonsense! Say your say," replied Dick. "Ned, you shut up for a moment. What's the use of all this child's play?"

"What I was about to remark," said the Unknown, "is that we never ought to have left the island without going up on top of the hill and seeing if we could not discover a light on the tundra."

"There's sense in that," declared Ned. "If these

toughs live around here they must have a camp, and a camp means a fire, but the top of our island hill will hardly give us a high enough view for that."

"Don't you fret, I can fix it," declared the detective. "Now, let us go back again."

They turned the boat and pulled back to the island. The top of the bluff raised them only about twenty feet above the water, and that was not sufficient to give them the extended view of the tundra that the occasion demanded, and they looked in vain for a light.

"Can you see anything, Zed?" Ned inquired.

"Not a thing," replied the detective. "Wish I could, but I can't. No; there's nothing to be seen."

"A good time for you to explain your scheme, is it not?"

"Yes. Can you stand on my shoulders, Ned?"

"I might, but that would only give us a few feet more elevation."

"One may do it. Could you hold Dick on your shoulders while you stood on mine?"

"I'll bet you he can't!" cried Dick, "for I won't have it. No, sir! Not much!"

"I thought as much. Ned, you're a good strong fellow; you could hold us both."

"I suppose I could," replied Ned, for he now grasped the Unknown's idea.

The detective was a perfect gymnast. They had seen him do all sorts of clever business in this line.

"Dick can hold us both as well as I can," he declared. "I'll go on top. That will give us a good rise, and if there is any light on the tundra we ought to see it, sure."

The plan was immediately put into action.

Dick spread his legs wide apart and planted himself firmly.

The Unknown clapped his hands upon his shoulders, put his right foot on the boy's hip, and was up in an instant.

"Don't move, Dick. Stand firm. That's all I ask!" he cried. "Now, then, Ned, give me your hand."

Now came the tug of war, but Young Klondike was something of a gymnast, too, and after one or two attempts he did manage to get upon the Unknown's shoulders.

But there was no such thing as staying there.

"Jump!" yelled Dick. "I can't hold you!" and the next moment all three were sprawling on the ground.

Nobody was hurt, and they were up again in a jiffy.

"See anything while you were up there, dear boy?" the detective asked.

"Fortunately I did," replied Ned. "There's a light on the tundra right over there. I should think it was about a mile away."

"Good enough!" said the detective. "Hold the location in your mind and we've got 'em. An enemy

came into our camp, and by the Jumping Jeremiah, we'll put an enemy into theirs!"

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE MADMAN SAVED EDITH AND THE GOLD.

"THERE goes a boat! Ye gods and little fishes, yes! What can it mean?"

Young Klondike and his friends were on their way back to the tundra, when suddenly a small boat shot out from the shadows of the high moss and turned into the slew.

There was one man in the boat and he was pulling for all he was worth.

They only had a view of him for an instant before he vanished, and no one was able to get a good look at his face.

"Who can he be?" exclaimed Ned.

"One of the gang, I suppose," replied the Unknown. "Undoubtedly he has been sent to spy out the land—in other words to watch our movements."

"I suppose you'll both jump on me if I suggest that he was about the build of the madman," said Dick.

"Impossible! How could he get here?" replied Ned.

"Nothing impossible about it. We left him the boat and he has had plenty of time to get around."

"Without our observing him, Dick? Wouldn't we have been sure to see him when he passed the island?"

"That's nonsense," said the detective. "We were busy with other matters while we were on the island. Dick is right enough in assuming that it might be the madman. Still I don't think it is. I'm inclined to believe that it was one of the gang."

"Shall we follow him?" asked Ned. "That is a great deal more to the point."

"I think we had better," replied the detective. "That slew runs in the right direction, does it not?"

"It does."

"Then by all means let us follow him—that is, if we can."

The last was well put, for when they turned into the slew the boat and its solitary oarsman were nowhere to be seen.

They kept along the slew, however, and after pulling about three-quarters of a mile, Ned caught a glimpse of a light ahead, shining faintly through the moss.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "That's the light I saw!"

"We must go slow now," said the detective, "and above all, we must be very careful they don't hear us. Guess we'd better muffle the oars."

The Unknown had brought an old blanket along for this very purpose, and he now tore off several strips and tied them around the oar blades, which served the purpose perfectly.

"We are all right now," he declared. "Let us move on."

A short pull brought them to a turn of the slew, and here another discovery was made.

Right ahead of them was a small lake. There were no islands to be seen, but projecting out into the lake was a short stretch of higher ground. Probably it was actually an island, but it backed up against the tundra, which gave it more the appearance of a peninsular, and upon it was a clump of trees and several rude huts. In the window of one of them burned a light.

"The enemy's camp!" whispered the detective. "We've made a strike."

"What's to be done?" asked Ned. "We don't want to make any mistake now."

"Ye gods and little fishes, no! I haven't the least doubt that Edith is there."

"And the gold?"

"Bother the gold! How can you think of it at such a time, Ned?"

"Hold your horses, old man. Edith first every time, but if the gold is going I want to get it. No objection to that, I suppose?"

"Not the least in the world. I didn't understand you. Now, then, boys, there are two things we want to do."

"Name them," said Ned. "I'm ready for any scheme you may propose."

"First we've got to locate Edith; second we must so cut off their chances of following us that in case we capture Edith and get her to the boat we are safe!"

"I grasp your meaning. You think they have boats?"

"Don't I know it?"

"Of course you do. That's all right. Go on."

"What I say is let me go up to those huts alone and reconnoiter; Dick remains with the boat, and you, Ned, must manage to get around on the other side of the island, and either destroy their boats or tow them over to the other side of the slew."

"Phew!" cried Ned. "I see what you are driving at. You want me to go in swimming. Well, I came prepared for it. I have my bathing suit under the seat."

"Now, see there!" chuckled the detective. "Who dares to say that great minds don't think alike?"

"You agree, Ned?"

"Most decidedly it is the best way. I'll swim around the point and find out just how the land lies along the shore, while you sneak up to the hut and see what can be done."

"It makes me feel mighty small to have nothing to do with the matter but to sit here," said Dick, "but I don't want to be a kicker, so I agree."

"Good-by, boys!" cried the Unknown. "I'll make no move without communicating with you, Ned. We want to act all together when we get ready for the final move."

Thus saying the Unknown stepped ashore and stole up the bank.

Ned hastily undressed and pulling on his bathing drawers, plunged boldly into the icy water.

It was fearfully cold, and for the first moment it seemed to the brave boy as though he never could endure it; but he was warm blooded and soon his chilled limbs grew accustomed to the change.

"This is all right. I can stand it," thought Ned, and he banished all fears of cramp and swam boldly on.

As soon as he was around the point, he saw that the Unknown had made no mistake.

There were five small boats drawn up on the shore, and near them under the bank was a log hut.

Ned swam on until he was abreast of the boats, and then landing stole up to the hut and looked in through the window.

There was a smoldering fire burning on the hearth, and by the feeble light furnished by the glowing coals Ned saw two things, both of which were very interesting to him just then.

First and foremost there was the big nugget lying on the floor in a corner, and on the table were several small bags all bearing the initials G. & L., which meant Golden & Luckey, if Young Klondike knew anything. In short, they were their own bags, and here was the stolen gold.

Quite as much to the point was the other interesting discovery. A man lay asleep on the floor before the fire. He was wrapped in blankets, and his head was pillow'd on a coat folded up small.

"Good enough!" muttered Ned. "Here is the guard, and he has gone to sleep; that means that he knows the others are asleep up above. The Unknown's chance is just as good as mine."

Ned thought a moment, drawing rapid conclusions.

"I must go right to work," he determined. "Edith first; that means to dispose of the boats first, all but one—that I shall hold for the gold."

Dropping into the water again, Ned pulled off the boats, one after another, and towed them over to the opposite side of the slew, where he ran them into the moss out of sight.

There was now only one boat remaining, and this Ned determined to hold in reserve for the gold if he could get it, and he felt very sure that he could.

As he reached the shore and was about to scramble out, he was suddenly startled by seeing a man rise up out of the boat.

A second look quieted his fears, however. It was only the Unknown. The detective laid his finger on his lips, and stepping out of the boat, hurried along the shore to meet Ned.

"Well," he breathed, "you know how the land lies here, I suppose? You've got only a drunken man to attend to. You must have worked right lively, dear boy, to get the boats off as soon as you did."

"Edith! What about Edith?" whispered Ned.

"Edith is locked in a hut, and another drunken man is asleep on the doorstep. I could have killed

him offhand if I had chosen, but, of course, I am not in that line."

"You saw Edith then?"

"Through the window, yes."

"What was she doing?"

"Lying in a bunk."

"Tied up?"

"Yes, her hands were tied behind her as near as I could make out."

"Did she see you?"

"No, she didn't, and I didn't dare to make my presence known. We've got to go slow with this business, and I thought it would be safer to find out what you were about first."

"Well, what's the move now, Zed? I'm freezing to death. I don't want to stand idly here."

"I'm sure I don't want you to, dear boy. Get on the move as soon as you wish. I say the next thing to do is to put the gold into that boat."

"I was going to suggest it, but I was afraid you would jump on me and say Edith first."

"We've got to take the situation as we find it. And by the way, I'm not jumping on anybody. Edith is safe enough where she is for a few moments. It won't take us long."

"But that man in the hut?"

"Is dead drunk and not likely to interfere with us."

"How do you know?"

"Why, I was inside and had a look at him. I could smell his breath. He's as full as a goat."

"By gracious, Zed, it is wonderful how you manage to get around without anyone seeing you, and I was watching the hut pretty close, too."

"Oh, that's my business, dear boy. I was watching you. Didn't want to interfere with your business, so I didn't speak; but come, are you ready? Because, if you are, we had better be on the move."

"I'm ready. If I don't get on the move I shall freeze to death, that's sure."

"Phew! it makes me cold to look at you. Well, here goes."

They stole toward the hut, the door of which now stood open, for the Unknown had left it so.

The loud snores of the man on the hearth proclaimed his condition, and Young Klondike saw at a glance that they had nothing to fear from him.

"Is there no guard at all up there?" he asked. "Is everybody else asleep?"

"Everybody as far as I know," replied the detective, "and you may be very certain I took a good look."

"Fire away, then. The big nugget first. It will take two of us to lift that."

They carried it down to the shore, and after pushing the boat off and making it fast to a stunted tree, the big nugget was lifted in.

The bags then followed, after which the detective closed the door of the hut, and they were all ready for a start.

"Just as I told you it would be, dear boy," he said; "that fellow never made a move."

" Didn't expect he would after I got a close look at him," replied Ned. " Now, then, what do we do? Go for Edith or return to Dick?"

" Dick first. When we make the rush for Edith we will all go."

So they pulled the boat back to where they had left Dick, and Ned lost no time in getting into his clothes.

" This is first-rate as far as it has gone," said Dick, " but what about that man we saw going up the slew in his boat?"

" I've seen nothing of him," the detective replied.

" I'll bet it was the madman. He's hovering around here somewhere."

" Let him hover. From what you have told me I don't believe he will interfere with us very seriously. Now, boys, for our final move. We want to get Edith this time."

They all left the boats then and stole up upon the bluff.

Here everything was quiet as when the detective had left it, and they crept on toward the hut where Edith was confined.

The guard was still sleeping peacefully on the door-step with a rifle laid across his knees.

" I don't particularly care to pose as a thief and a robber," whispered the detective, " but I rather think I want that thing," and he took the rifle gently away from the sleeping man, who never stirred.

" Shall we tackle the window or do we go in by the door?" whispered Dick.

" We shall have to step over this fellow if we use the door," said the detective, " but on the other hand the window is nailed fast. I tried it when I was here before. It will make a deuce of a noise if we break in."

" The door is the only way," said Ned. " We might lift that fellow off the step and I don't believe he would ever wake."

" Too big a risk altogether," said the Unknown. " Just wait a bit. I'll let Edith know we are here."

He crept to the window and tapped lightly on the pane.

A guttering candle was burning inside, and they could see Edith turn her head and look toward the window, and as it was dark outside, they felt that it was very doubtful if she could see them.

" It will let her know that there is something in the wind, anyhow," said the detective. " Now, then, in we go! Keep a sharp watch on that fellow, Dick. Don't shoot unless you have to. Thunder! he is awake now."

Just then the man straightened up and opened his eyes, giving a frightful yell, and then springing to his feet.

" Stop that!" cried the detective, jumping on him and seizing him by the throat. " In with you, boys!" he added. " The mischief is probably done now!"

And so it was!

The Unknown choked the man into silence and

tumbled him over on the ground, but at the same instant the doors of two of the other huts were thrown open, and out rushed half a dozen men armed with rifles.

" What's the matter down there?" yelled one, and he threw up his rifle and sent a shot whizzing past the Unknown's head.

Now, if this had found Ned and Dick standing idly by waiting to see the outcome of the Unknown's attack, the result might have been serious enough.

But Young Klondike and his partner were not that sort, of course. At the first alarm they rushed into the hut.

" I knew you'd come!" cried Edith. " Set me free, boys. Give me a rifle; I'll do my part."

Now, to do this took less than a minute. In less than two Edith was outside, and hers was the second shot which flew toward the attacking toughs, the Unknown having already got in one before they came out.

" Retreat to the boat!" he shouted. " Fire as you go!"

" Halt there!" yelled one of the toughs. " Halt, or we will shoot everyone of you! Throw up your hands!"

" Throw down yours!" bawled the Unknown. " By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'll read you a lesson! I'll teach you to come sneakng into our camp at night!"

He fired again and Edith got in one more shot, Ned and Dick doing the same.

Two men fell back wounded, but this scarcely reduced the number of the enemy, for six more came tumbling out of the huts, and there is no telling what the result might have been if a strange occurrence had not at that moment taken place.

All at once a man with long hair streaming in the wind came rushing out of the swamp behind the huts.

He was armed with a rifle which he quickly emptied, at the same time yelling:

" I'm the king of the Klondike! Down with all rebels! Come on, my faithful subjects! Come on and wipe these scoundrels out!"

Every shot told, although apparently none were fatal, for the toughs made a break for the bluffs which overhung the shore.

It was Young Klondike's mad miner, and he had turned the tide of battle.

" Take me with you!" he cried, running with Young Klondike's party. " Take me away from this place. Hooray! I'm the king of the Klondike! Take me with you and you are safe. I can fight a hundred men."

A moment later and they reached the boats and pushed off with Edith and the gold.

CHAPTER XI.

WORKING ON THE ISLAND AGAIN.

ALL was quiet on the island when Young Klondike's party reached it and it was the same in the

boats, for the mad miner after a few incoherent words curled himself up in the stern of the forward boat and sank into a sound sleep.

They were not followed. This, of course, Ned had practically rendered out of the question for the time being.

The boats belonging to the toughs were securely hidden in the tundra and it would take time to find them and bring them across the slew.

"Did they do you any harm, Edith? Are you injured in any way? Did they offer you any insult?" were the first questions put to the girl, Ned, Dick and the Unknown all speaking in one breath.

"No, no! I'm all right," replied Edith. "Of course I was awfully frightened, but I knew you would come for me, so I didn't do as much worrying as you may think."

"What was their idea in carrying you off?" asked Ned. "Did they say anything about that?"

"It was to make you pay a big ransom for me. The leader was going down to the island as soon as it came daylight. From what I overheard him say I believe the plan was to ask a hundred thousand dollars for my safe return."

"Which, of course, we would have paid sooner than have any harm come to you," said Ned, emphatically.

"Certainly, we would," added Dick, "but thank goodness it didn't come to that. Who seemed to be the leader, Edith, did you find out his name?"

"He seemed to be a French Canadian. I heard them call him Jacques, and by the way, I've got a surprise for you all."

"Out with it," said the Unknown. "If you can surprise me with anything I'd like to know it."

"Well, I think I can. Our guide, Pierre, far from being dead——"

"Is with that gang, and no prisoner, either!" broke in the Unknown. "Well, well, I thought as much."

Then Ned told Edith about their adventures with the madman, and by the time he had finished they were back at the island, and the remainder of the night passed quietly enough.

Morning dawned clear and cool, and found Young Klondike on the watch, the others having turned in to try and get a little sleep.

And there was one who did not wake up even when the sun rose, and did not appear at the breakfast table that morning.

It was the mad miner. Young Klondike found it impossible to arouse this strange being when they reached the island, and he had been carefully covered with blankets in the boat and left to sleep his sleep out.

But when daylight came he was just as sound asleep as ever, and no amount of shaking or calling seemed to produce the least effect.

"What are we going to do with him?" asked Young Klondike.

"Let's carry him up to the tent and make a special shelter for him," suggested Dick.

"Certainly we owe him a certain debt of gratitude," said Edith. "We might never have escaped but for him."

"It's my opinion," said the detective, "that this strange sleep is part of his condition. It may do him good. Perhaps this fit is going to prove a short one. It wouldn't surprise me at all if he woke up quite sane."

But the mad miner was not waking up just then, whatever he might do later on.

The boys built a shelter of hemlock boughs, and the unfortunate man was carried up and laid inside.

Although he was pretty well shaken up during the operation he never moved a muscle and they left him sleeping as sound as ever.

"That fellow is a puzzle for fair," remarked the detective, "but we can afford to leave him alone for awhile. What's to be done next, boys?"

"I say let's go to work," replied Ned. "Our business is gold digging and we'd better be at it, seeing that there's no chance to get out of this infernal swamp."

"Lost in the Great Swamp! It's a sad fate!" cried the Unknown, "but I know a man who can help us out."

"Who?" asked Dick.

"Pierre, the guide."

"Pshaw! I presume there are fifty men in Klopstock who could help us out and as many more scattered about the old Russian diggings. They are about as much use to us as Pierre."

"You're wrong," said the detective. "They are of no use to us, at all, because we can't get at them, but we can get at Pierre."

"Hello! Do you mean to go for Mr. Pierre and put him to work?" demanded Ned.

"Yes, I do! Confound the scoundrel! Think of all the worrying we've done about him, and after all I suppose he meant to betray us to this gang from the first."

"It looks that way, of course," replied Ned. "But you'd better let him alone. It would be the height of folly to risk another encounter with the gang."

The detective made a mumbling reply and walked away.

"The Unknown is good for another of his mysterious disappearances about this time," remarked Ned. "Just wait a bit. You'll see."

And, sure enough, before the sun was an hour high, Edith discovered that one of the boats was missing, and the detective was nowhere to be found.

They did not waste much time in worrying about it, however, for they knew the Unknown's ways too well to imagine that worrying would do the least good.

Before this Ned and Dick had gone to work on the shaft in the gully, and noon found them ready to begin a clean up, for the mild weather had prevented the thawed out ground from freezing again.

"This looks well, Dick," remarked Young Klondike, poking over the pile of sand. "I can see the little nuggets with the naked eye."

"Same with me," replied Dick. "It's my opinion it is going to pan out rich."

"Shall we do a little washing before dinner, or wait until we have given Edith's cooking a try?"

"Oh, we may as well wash out a few pans just to see how it goes," replied Dick.

There was plenty of water to be had from the small stream which ran through the bottom of the gully, and the boys went to their washing; by the end of half an hour they were able to report the most astonishing results.

The first pan showed a yield of over fifteen hundred dollars, roughly estimated, of course, but it was not possible that it could be more than a hundred dollars out of the way.

The second pan showed a little over twelve hundred, but the third gave the astonishing yield of two thousand.

Ned knew that it was coming. He could tell by the enormous weight of the sand as he lifted the pan.

"Well, by the Jumping Jeremiah, as the Unknown would say, if he were here," cried Young Klondike, "this beats anything I ever saw."

"It's a most unheard of yield for simple panning," replied Dick. "This mine is well worth working. We must put a gang of men on it, Ned, if we ever manage to find our way out of the Great Swamp."

"Which we are going to do sooner or later, of course, but I hear Edith calling us to dinner. We had better go."

It wasn't very much of a dinner, but the boys complimented Edith on the creditable manner in which she handled the few provisions they possessed, and the talk was all gold and about the wonderful yield.

"Of course we must remember that the mine don't belong to us," said Ned. "If it has ever been recorded we shall be able to find it out in Dawson City, and if not, why, all we've got to do is to jump the claim under the mining law."

"How is the mad miner?" asked Dick. "Have you seen him lately, Edith?"

"I had a look at him a short time before I called you," replied Edith. "He seemed to be sleeping just the same then."

"Guess I'll look in on him," said Ned, and he went over to the shelter to find, to his astonishment, that it was deserted.

The mad miner had disappeared.

But how had he gone?

The boat was drawn up on the shore all right, and there was no place on the island where the man could hide.

"He must have drowned himself!" exclaimed Ned, and with a shout he told Dick and Edith how the case stood.

"Perhaps he has swum over to the tundra," suggested Dick.

"He could not have used his own boat; that must

have been left up at Jacques' camp," said Ned. "I'm afraid the poor wretch has drowned himself and I'm sorry, for he did try to do me a good turn."

"That's what's the matter," said Dick. "If there was anything we could do—hello! Here is a letter! By Jove, it's addressed to Young Klondike, too!"

The letter was just the leaf of a memorandum book with a few lines scribbled on it. Dick picked it up and handed it to Ned, who read as follows:

"Don't forget that the miners are starving in the swamp. You go in by the slew just beyond where you left me. I'm going there now to try to rescue them. I've lost my boat, so I'm going to swim. Come, Young Klondike. Your king commands it. Come and help in the good work. GEORGE REX."

"Well, upon my word, this is most extraordinary!" exclaimed Ned. "Does he expect to swim all the way across the lake and then up the slew?"

"Probably he don't expect anything; he is just going to do it," replied Edith. "Madmen, you know, will do strange things."

"We must follow him," declared Ned. "This fully accounts for the cries we heard last night. If there is a party of suffering miners lost in the swamp we must go to the rescue."

"But the Unknown! Can we leave him behind?" asked Edith.

"Then there is the gold," said Dick. "We don't want to lose that again."

"We can hide the gold," replied Ned, "and a note can be left for the Unknown telling him where we have gone. It is in the cause of humanity, and we must not hesitate!"

Work on the island was going on in good earnest, and there seemed to be plenty to do beside digging gold.

CHAPTER XII.

JUST IN TIME.

LOADING such provisions as would quickest relieve the necessities of a starving party into the boat, Young Klondike with Edith and Dick set off over the lake, heading for the slew, up which Mr. Pomeroy had led them the night before.

As they rowed along they discussed the mad miner and the singular adventures through which they had passed.

"If we could only get out of the swamp," remarked Ned. "That's what's troubling me. I don't like the idea of being lost here with winter coming on, for all the big nuggets on earth won't compensate for the risk we run of losing our lives."

"If we don't get out soon there will be no chance of getting out before spring," said Dick, "and of course we are not at all prepared to winter here. It was a crazy undertaking starting for the Russian diggings this time of year."

"I wonder how far we are from Klopstock," said Edith. "Of course we have no idea, and for all we know we may be within a few miles of it."

"True enough," replied Dick, "but even allowing that is so, since we don't know the way we might just as well be at the other end of the earth."

"Hello!" cried Ned. "What's all that smoke over there?"

The atmosphere was unusually clear that morning and one could see for a long distance. Ned pointed out a column of smoke off to the westward. It rose straight up, for there was no wind, and just beyond it was another column and beyond that a third.

"What do you make out of it?" demanded Edith. "It's in exactly the opposite direction from Jacques' camp."

"Why, it must be frost fires," replied Ned. "It can't be anything else."

"Then there you are," said Dick. "There is nobody building frost fires on the tundra, I suppose."

"I don't know about that," laughed Ned. "Wouldn't want to be sure. We built one on the island, didn't we?"

"That's what we did."

"Well, then, anyone seeing our fire would have been puzzled, same as we are now, but I don't believe those are frost fires, Dick. My idea is that they are burning in the old Russian diggings. That's Klopstock diggings as sure as you live."

Now, Young Klondike was fully justified in this conclusion, for the smoke was in the direction of Klopstock, and there was absolutely no other mining camp near.

"That's worth looking into," declared Ned. "Locate the direction, Dick. We shall make a move that way as soon as we are through with this business."

They pulled on and entered the slew. Before they had quite reached the place where they lost sight of the mad miner the day before, they were suddenly startled by the sound of something like a big animal rushing through the tundra moss.

"What in the world is that?" exclaimed Edith. "Can it be a moose or a caribou?"

"Hardly on the tundra," replied Ned. "It's something, though. Get ready, Edith. We may have a fight on hand."

Edith leveled her rifle in the direction of the sound.

They had not long to wait. All at once they saw the mad miner rush out of the tundra and dive headfirst into the slew, giving a wild shout as he went.

In a moment he rose to the surface, and without looking back or showing by any sign that he was aware of the presence of the boat, he went swimming off up the slew yelling in the wildest fashion.

"Pull! Pull!" cried Ned. "We must catch up with him! Hello, there, Mr. Pomeroy! Hello!"

He might as well have called to the winds for any attention the mad miner paid to him.

In a few moments he turned into the tundra and vanished from their sight.

"What an extraordinary person he is to be sure!" exclaimed Edith. "Do you think the slew we are looking for is there?"

"Wouldn't wonder at all," replied Ned. "Let's push right on and see."

Before they had taken a dozen strokes all were startled by loud cries coming over the swamp.

"Help! Help! Help!" rang out through the giant moss.

"Fire a shot! Let them know we are here!" exclaimed Dick. "I'll bet you what you like those are the people we are looking for."

Edith fired twice. Immediately the cries ceased.

"That settled them," said Dick. "Gave them the scare, I suppose. Like enough they've been attacked by the Jacques gang."

"Hello there! Hello! Who are you and where are you?" shouted Ned. "You need not be afraid of us if you are in trouble, friends."

"We are lost in the swamp!" came the answer, after a few moments. "We are starving to death. If you can help us, for Heaven's sake do it, for we are almost gone!"

"That's business!" cried Ned. "We've located them at last. Who are you?" he yelled. "We want to know who you are?"

"A party of prospectors bound into the old Russian diggings. Who are you?"

"They call me Young Klondike!" replied Ned. "Perhaps you have heard the name!"

"Hooray! Hooray!"

A shout went up which proved that the name of Young Klondike was perfectly well known.

"How many in your party?" cried Ned.

"Eleven!" came the answer.

"Where are you?"

"We can't tell you. We don't know."

"Are you in the moss or on an island?"

"On an island. We can't be far from you. We can hear you very plain."

"All right! We'll try and find you, but I don't know as we can give you much help. We are lost in the swamp ourselves."

It proved, however, to be less trouble to locate the distressed party than Young Klondike anticipated, for in a moment they came to the place where the mad miner had disappeared and found, as they had expected, a cross slew.

To follow this was easy enough. They saw nothing of Mr. Pomeroy, but every stroke brought them nearer and nearer to the voices which kept shouting to them from time to time.

At last a turn in the slew brought them in sight of a small island occupying the middle of the sluggish stream which here widened.

A number of half starved looking men were gathered on the shore and a wild shout of welcome went up as Young Klondike's boat approached.

"Thank God you have come, young man!" exclaimed a tall miner, who wore a heavy red beard. "I

don't believe we could have survived two days longer. We haven't a blessed thing to eat in the camp."

"Oh, we can fix you off all right on that score!" answered Ned. "Don't worry, friends. For the time being your troubles are over. We've brought the grub along and will give you a good square meal right now."

It is a pleasant thing to feed the hungry.

Young Klondike had an opportunity to enjoy that pleasure to the fullest extent that day, for a more ravenous crowd than these miners one never saw.

The leader introduced himself as Charley Rolfs; a Chicago man, he said he was. Being unsuccessful in his prospecting operations on the Klondike he determined to try his luck at the old Russian diggings, and gathering a party around him they had started by way of Jake's Relay House and the Barman Fields three weeks before.

When they reached the Great Swamp their guide deserted them and they soon lost their way among the swamps, and right after this they were attacked by the Jacques gang and robbed of everything of value in their possession.

"We begged hard to have them guide us into Klopstock, or back to the foot of the mountains," added Charley Rolfs. "We'd have cheerfully given them even the clothes on our backs if they would only have done this, but they wouldn't listen nor tell us which way to go. All they would do was to leave us our boats and I suppose that was because they were old and leaky, otherwise I don't believe but what they would have shot every one of us, and carried off the boats."

"They are a bad lot," said Ned, and he related his own experience with them.

"What was your guide's name?" he added, seized with a sudden idea.

"Pierre Montalban," replied Charley Rolfs.

"As I supposed. He is the scoundrel we hired to guide us through to Klopstock. A snowstorm which we encountered on the Barman Fields rather spoiled his plans, but he got in his fine work later. One of our party has gone to look for him now. If he ever gets his hands on the fellow, there'll be no more acting as capper for the Jacques gang, and that's just about what he has been doing right along."

It was decided that they should all return to the island and join forces. Charley Rolfs' party seemed to be an honest, straightforward lot, and Young Klondike felt that he could trust them with his golden secret.

He had another idea also in connection with these men.

"We'll put them to work on the mine, Dick," he whispered. "If we can once get through to Klopstock and raise a party to hunt these toughs out of the swamp, there is no reason why we shouldn't hire all these fellows and let them work the mine on shares."

The scheme was certainly a good one, for Charley Rolfs' party was now penniless, and as it is no easy

matter to hire men in the Klondike at any price, these seemed to be just the sort of fellows Young Klondike needed for his work.

As they pulled down the slew, Ned asked Charley Rolfs about the mad miner.

"That man!" cried Charley. "Why, of course we have seen him many a time. He scared us almost to death first time he came, for there he was swimming in the slew and yelling out that he was the king of the Klondike. Then all at once he made a bolt right into the tundra, where any sane man would sink into the mud up to his neck. I don't see how he does it, I vow!"

"Wall, now, boss," said a grizzled old miner who was one of Charley's party, "that reminds me of the madman of Newfoundland."

"Hold up, Henry," said Charley, "I just want to tell Young Klondike that we have seen him many times since, and once he came on the island and talked quite sensibly and promised to send us help. That was last night, in fact. Say, boss, perhaps it was him what sent you?"

"That's who it was," replied Ned. "I'll tell you my experiences with him later. Now, then, Henry, let us hear about your madman of Newfoundland."

"Wall, boss, it was when I was working in the copper mines at Betts' Cove, on the island of Newfoundland, that I seen him. Everybody knew him in them days. That man used to walk all over the island—it's entirely uninhabited in the interior, you know. He'd be seen on the Atlantic coast, and then all of a sudden he'd pop up in the Labrador settlements, or away up north or some other place; but what I was a-getting at was his swimming in the icy waters. Didn't make no difference whether it was winter or summer; he'd jump right in and swim across a river or a channel. No one ever knew who he was nor never will now, for one night he was found dead in a lonely hut on the Labrador coast, and that's what will happen to this fellow some of these days, you'll see."

"I've heard of that man," said Ned. "I read about him in the papers before I left New York, but here we are at the lake and it's only a short distance to the island now. Hello! Some one firing! What's the meaning of this?"

Rifle shots were heard off in the direction of the island, and anxious to know what they meant Young Klondike and Charley made all possible haste to get their boats around out of the slew.

Here the island lay in plain sight before them, and to their dismay they could see a number of boats filled with men along the shore.

Several of the men were firing up at the bluff where stood the Unknown perfectly regardless of his danger firing down at them.

They could see the plucky little detective shake his fist at the gang and hear his shouts as he ordered them off, although they were not able to distinguish words.

"Great Scott! It's the Jacques gang!" cried Dick.

"Faster! Pull faster!" exclaimed Edith. "The Unknown can't hope to hold on there long! We are just in time!"

CHAPTER XIII.

OUT OF THE GREAT SWAMP AT LAST.

"ARE we just in time to save the Unknown or just in time to be too late?" cried Ned, filled with a thousand fears.

Indeed, it looked pretty black for the Unknown.

Anybody else would have retreated from the edge of the bluff instantly, but the detective stuck to his post and fired shot after shot.

Anybody else would have done some damage to the enemy, but the Unknown's aim was notoriously bad, and Ned could not see that his firing interfered much with those in the boats.

All at once they saw the Unknown's plug hat go flying off; evidently a bullet had gone through it, and this seemed to settle the business, for the detective immediately beat a retreat and passed out of view.

A shout went up from the boats, and the men began pulling for the shore with the evident intention of landing on the island.

Up to this time they did not appear to have caught sight of Young Klondike's party, and Ned and Charley Rolfs, who had been pushing forward for all they were worth, were now within rifle range.

"This is our time!" cried Young Klondike. "Let them have it, boys! Now then, altogether!"

There were three rifles among Charley Rolfs' party which had escaped the thieves, and as Ned, Dick and Edith each had theirs, they were able to let the enemy have a very respectable volley!

It did the business.

Three men fell back in the boats wounded.

"Sheer off from that island or you are all dead men!" shouted Young Klondike, and before the enemy could bring their boats around so that they could get a shot, two more volleys were poured upon them, and as far as Ned could see there was more damage done.

At all events this settled the battle, for the boats were turned in the opposite direction. Pulling around the island the attacking party was soon out of sight.

Then the Unknown appeared on the bluff waving his hat and shouting:

"Come on! Come on, Young Klondike! By the Jumping Jeremiah, we've made them hunt a hole, and I've made a capture! Come on and see who it is!"

"Zed thinks he's done a big thing," laughed Edith. "I can tell by the way he speaks; but who do you think he can have got hold of?"

"I'm sure I can't imagine," replied Ned.

"The madman," suggested Dick.

"Now that's nonsense," said Ned. "How could the mad miner get back to the island unless he had wings."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Dick. "While we stopped to feed our friends here he might have swam back—there was plenty of time."

But as everybody pooh-poohed this, Dick said no more about it, and they pulled on to the island to be met by the detective on the shore.

"Well, what have you been up to now, Zed?" cried Edith. "You are always getting into some scrape."

"Up to snuff and up to Jacques' camp where I made a capture," exclaimed the detective. "I found him asleep in the lower hut and I marched him out. I was seen, though, and the gang followed me as soon as they could launch their boats. Ye gods and little fishes! You all came just in time. I say, Young Klondike, who have you got there?"

Ned explained while the prospectors were coming ashore, but not a word of explanation would the Unknown give.

"I've got my man, that's all!" he kept saying. "Come up on the bluff and see who he is."

Of course no one expected to see the Unknown's mythical man when they arrived at the tent, and they were not disappointed, for the detective's prisoner proved to be no less a person than Pierre.

"By gracious! here's good luck!" cried Young Klondike. "Now we've got a man who can guide us out of the Great Swamp."

Pierre, whose hands were bound behind him, scowled blackly.

"Mebbe I will and mebbe I won't!" he said. "I don't like the way you treated me, boss. 'Twan't a squar deal to go off and desert me the way you did."

"Rats!" cried the Unknown. "Did we run our sled down that Devil's Slide on purpose? Did we tell you to jump off?"

"All the same I don't like it," growled Pierre. "That's what made me join this gang."

"Rubbish!" cried Charley Rolfs. "You're a capper for the gang, that's what you are. Don't you know me?"

"No; never seen you in my life before," grunted the guide.

"He lies, boss," said Charley, turning to Young Klondike. "This is the guide who betrayed us. I'm prepared to shoot him for his treachery, if you say the word."

"You don't surprise me, Charley," replied Young Klondike, "but to shoot him would certainly be a very foolish piece of business. What this fellow has got to do is to guide us out of the Great Swamp."

"We'll see about that," growled Pierre.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, you bet we will!" cried the Unknown. "You're as good as dead if you refuse."

After that a council of war was held, and there was a general comparing of notes all around.

It was determined to make a start at once and to go in the direction of Klopstock. Ned told about the smoke, which indeed was still visible, and it was decided that the camp could not be so very far away.

"We'll leave the gold where you buried it, dear boy," the Unknown remarked to Ned. "I like your plan of hiring these men, and I think we can put it through if we can only get a party at Klopstock to help us hunt the Jacques gang out of the swamp."

Ned then took Charley Rolfs and one or two of his men down into the gully and showed them how the sand panned out.

"I'll give you and your friends ten dollars a day and half interest in all you take out to work this claim for me through the winter," Ned now announced. "You shall be provided with a comfortable house and plenty of provisions, and I think you can make a good thing out of it. All you want is to be assured that you are safe from attack by the Jacques gang, and I think we shall be able to fix that, too."

This very liberal proposition was received with the greatest enthusiasm, for all these men had heard of the wonderful success of Golden & Luckey and were only too glad of an opportunity to associate themselves with the firm.

Preparations for an immediate departure were now put in order and soon they were ready for a start.

"I hate terribly to go away and leave that unfortunate fellow Pomeroy behind us," Ned remarked to Dick, as they were about to go down to the boats.

The words were no more than uttered when the hemlock boughs which formed the front of the brush shelter were thrown aside and out walked the mad miner to the utter astonishment of all.

His clothes were wet and sodden, and his long hair hung in a matted mass down upon his shoulders, but he was sane and answered rationally when Young Klondike addressed him.

Of all that had happened since he jumped overboard on the previous night, he had not the faintest recollection. Nor could he tell how he got back to the camp.

"No matter. Don't worry about me. I'm used to it," he said, "but for Heaven's sake take me with you to Klopstock. Get me out of this dreadful swamp before winter comes on."

Of course, nobody raised any objection, and the mad miner went in Young Klondike's boat.

They passed out of the lake into a wide slew, and for an hour pulled toward the smoke through various windings, guided by Pierre, who grudgingly pointed out the way, when the Unknown's revolver had been a few times planked at his head.

If it had not been that the smoke was constantly coming nearer, Young Klondike might well have doubted if it was safe to trust such a man as Pierre.

All at once the guide changed his tune.

"Say, boss!" he exclaimed, "I've been thinking this business over, and I've made up my mind that after all I'd sooner go to Klopstock than not."

"Come, what put that notion into your head?" de-

manded the detective. "What do you mean by this sudden change of front?"

"Come, now, I hain't a-talkin' to you," growled Pierre, "I'm addressing a gent what goes by the name of Young Klondike. Do you hear me, boss?"

"Of course I do," replied Ned, who had been listening to some of the details of Mr. Pomeroy's sad story, "but I must say I don't like the way you speak to my friend."

"Oh, that be blowed. What do I care for that little bag of wind? I say I've changed my mind and am ready to go to Klopstock. I'll turn State's evidence and give away the gang."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, you are mean enough to turn informer or any other old thing," cried the Unknown. "But here we are at the entrance to another slew; which do we do, take it or go straight on?"

"Take it," replied Pierre, promptly, and the boats were turned into the slew.

"If I remember rightly, our way lay straight ahead," said Mr. Pomeroy, looking anxiously around. "However, I can never trust my memory for anything nowadays, but I'm sure there is a cross slew leading out of this, back into the one we have just left a little distance ahead; perhaps he means to make a short cut, in which case it will be all right."

"That's the way!" cried Pierre. "Don't you try to throw no scare into Young Klondike, I'm running this business now."

"You're getting entirely too fresh! That's what's the matter with you!" cried the Unknown. "Ned, I'm afraid we are running into a trap."

"Look! Look behind us!" cried Edith. "Good gracious, you are right!"

A number of boats had suddenly come out of the tundra in the rear of Young Klondike's party. They were filled with armed toughs who immediately opened fire.

At the same instant Edith gave a shout, calling their attention to four other boats on ahead which had come into view around a turn in the sluggish stream, and were now bearing down upon them as fast as oars could pull them along.

"That's your work, you treacherous dog!" cried the detective, shaking his fist at Pierre. "You knew that Jacques would lay for us here. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I see him in the forward boat!"

"We must prepare to defend ourselves, friends!" cried Ned. "Charley Rolfs, you attend to our enemies in the rear, and we'll look out for the ones ahead. Zed, don't bother any more with that fellow. We'll settle his case when we get to Klopstock. Now, then, up rifles! Fire!"

But promptly as Ned acted, he was not in time to get in the first shot, for at the same instant a volley of bullets came flying toward them from both parties of the Jacques gang.

Young Klondike's answer was prompt, however, and for a few moments the battle raged in lively style.

Mr. Pomeroy took an oar and gave Ned a chance to use his rifle.

"Make for the cross slew!" he cried. "We are within a stone's throw of Klopstock now. If we can only cut in ahead of them, we may yet succeed in giving them the slip."

The Unknown plied his oar vigorously, and amid a rain of bullets they swung around into the cross slew.

A yell of rage went up from the other boat, as they passed out of sight between the big walls of moss, and Pierre scowled blackly, but his face grew darker still a moment later, though nobody noticed him when the shout of triumph went up from both boats.

There, right before them, was dry land and a mining camp and Old Glory waving.

"Klopstock at last!" cried the mad miner. "It was nearer than I thought for. We are safe!"

And so they were, for the Jacques gang followed them no further, and in a few moments Young Klondike's party landed in front of a collection of log huts.

Sturdy miners ran out to greet them. Many of them knew Young Klondike, having worked for Golden & Luckey in their different mines.

When Ned told his story, an expedition was fitted

out to hunt down the Jacques gang—they started early the following morning. Many of them were captured and turned over to the authorities, and the rest were driven out of the Great Swamp.

Young Klondike and his friends, after establishing Charley Rolfs' party at the mine on the island, went back to Dawson City, with their gold accompanied by Mr. Pomeroy, who remained sane during the entire journey, and, indeed, is still so. His mind seems to be completely restored, and he is now at work in Young Klondike's great mine in El Dorado creek.

Charley Rolfs is doing well on the island, and everything points to a successful mine. Ned found that the claim had never been located, and promptly had it recorded in the firm's name. It belongs to Golden & Luckey to-day.

Shortly before this journey to the old Russian diggings was undertaken, Ned and his friends passed through a series of highly interesting adventures in a different part of Alaska. These will be found fully described in the next number of this series, and it is a story which we advise all to read. It is entitled "YOUNG KLONDIKE'S INDIAN RAID; OR, THE SIX DAYS' FIGHT ON COPPER RIVER."

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